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ACTION SS-30

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EXDIS DECAPTIONED

E.O. 12065:RDS-1 5/18/00 (GLEYSTEN, W.H.) OR-M
TAGS: PGOV, PINS, MILI, KS, US
SUBJECT: MY CALL ON MARTIAL LAW COMMANDER GENERAL LEE
- HUI SUNG

REF: STATE 130472

1. (S) ENTIRE TEXT.

2. BEGIN SUMMARY: I MET MARTIAL LAW COMMANDER LEE MAY 18 TO MAKE REFTEL REPRESENTATIONS. HE TOOK IT IN, WITH GREATER ATTENTION WHERE SPECIFIC ACTIONS WERE MENTIONED. HE JUSTIFIED EXPANDED MARTIAL LAW AS NECESSARY TO DETER A DANGER WHICH HAD BECOME AN UNACCEPTABLE THREAT TO THE SURVIVAL OF THE ROK. THE RAMPANT GROWTH OF COMMUNIST THINKING AMONG STUDENTS AND RADICAL TENDENCIES WITHIN THE STUDENT MOVEMENT POSED THE LIKELIHOOD OF MASSIVE DISORDERS WHICH THE GOVERNMENT COULD NOT CONTROL WITHOUT UNDERMINING THE COUNTRY'S EXTERNAL SECURITY. HENCE THE STRONG DETERRENT ACTIONS OF MAY 17. HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE DECISION WAS TAKEN BY 40 SENIOR ARMY LEADERS AT MID-DAY AND LATER SOLD TO THE PRESIDENT, "WHO UNDERSTOOD". HE BRUSHED OFF MY STRONG COMPLAINTS ABOUT FAILURE TO KEEP US INFORMED, AND HE WAS INITIALLY CRITICAL OF THE U.S. AND HE PERSONALLY FOR NOT FULLY UNDERSTANDING EVENTS IN KOREA AND THE EXTENT

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY:
ROBERT H. MILLER
DATE/CASE ID: 21 FEB 2001 199604577

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TO WHICH WE WERE BEING USED BY VARIOUS ELEMENTS. HE

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ASSURED ME THAT NEITHER "STUDENT REVOLUTION" NOR "MILITARY DICTATORSHIP" WOULD OCCUR WHILE HE WAS MARTIAL LAW COMMANDER. ASKED IF OUR ANXIETY STEMMED FROM FEAR OF A MILITARY TAKEOVER, I EXPLAINED THAT WE WERE NOT GOVERNED BY WHAT WOULD BE DESIRABLE IN TERMS OF U.S. VALUES, BUT BY WHAT WAS ACCEPTABLE TO THE KOREAN PEOPLE -- I FEARED THE KOREAN PEOPLE WOULD INTERPRET THE PATTERN OF RECENT GOVERNMENT ACTIONS AS INCONSISTENT WITH THEIR DESIRE FOR ORDERLY POLITICAL PROGRESS. TOWARD THE END OF THE CONVERSATION LEE SHOWED MORE UNDERSTANDING OF THE REASONS FOR OUR CONCERN, STILL ARGUING HOWEVER THAT ROK INTERESTS IN SURVIVAL WOULD BE PARAMOUNT. THE ONLY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT WE MIGHT TO SOME EXTENT BE RIGHT IN OUR POLITICAL ASSESSMENT WAS HIS STATEMENT THAT THE APPOINTMENT OF CHUN DOO HWAN AS ACTING KCIA DIRECTOR HAD BEEN ONE ACTION THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO EXPLAIN SATISFACTORILY TO THE PEOPLE. THROUGHOUT THE GENERAL WAS PURE YUSHIN AND GAVE THE IMPRESSION OF KNOWING WHAT HE WAS DOING AND BEING COMFORTABLE IN HIS EXPLANATIONS. END SUMMARY.

3. ACCOMPANIED BY LT. GEN. ROSENCRANS AND POLCOUNS, I MET FOR ONE AND ONE-HALF HOURS MAY 18 WITH MARTIAL LAW COMMANDER LEE HUI SUNG (M-R: YI HUI-SONG). I INFORMED HIM THAT I HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED BY PRESIDENT CARTER TO MAKE REPRESENTATIONS TO HIM AND TO PRESIDENT CHOI AND THEN CAREFULLY READ FROM PARA 4, REFTEL. I ALSO OUTLINED INFORMATION CONTAINED IN PARAS 5 AND 6. I ADDED THAT I PERSONALLY FELT STRONGLY ABOUT THE EVENTS OF LAST NIGHT, WHICH I VIEWED WITH GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT. MY COLLEAGUES AND I HAD TRIED TO URGE MODERATION ON ALL PARTIES, WITH ONLY MARGINAL SUCCESS. WHILE WE UNDERSTOOD THE EXTENT AND DANGER OF STUDENT PROVOCATION, WE COULD ONLY VIEW THE

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ACTIONS OF YESTERDAY AS ILL-ADVISED AND DEEPLY DISTURBING.

4. I ASKED GENERAL LEE POINTEDLY HOW THE GOVERNMENT WAS FUNCTIONING AND TO WHOM I SHOULD SPEAK WHEN I HAD IMPORTANT QUESTIONS OR INSTRUCTIONS OF AN URGENT NATURE. AFTER JUST SAYING "THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS", LEE ASKED IF I HAD COME TO HIM BECAUSE OF A BELIEF THAT HIS POWER HAD EXPANDED. I RESPONDED THAT AT THIS POINT WE SIMPLY DID NOT KNOW WHOSE POWER HAD EXPANDED. WE HAD HAD SERIOUS DIFFICULTY OVER THE PERIOD SINCE THE ASSASSINATION

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OF PRESIDENT PARK IN DETERMINING WHO WAS IN CHARGE; FIRST WITH THE TEMPORARY GOVERNMENT, THEN WITH THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT, THEN AFTER DECEMBER 12 AND NOW. OTHER ACTIONS, SUCH AS THE APPOINTMENT OF AN ACTING KCIA DIRECTOR ALSO LEFT US WONDERING WHERE THE POWER OF DECISION RESIDED. OUR NEED FOR THIS KNOWLEDGE COULD BE ILLUSTRATED BY A SIMPLE EXAMPLE. OUR PUBLIC STATEMENT ON LAST NIGHT'S EVENTS WOULD WARN NORTH KOREA NOT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ROK. IN THIS AREA, THERE MIGHT BE A NEED FOR URGENT DISCUSSION EITHER OF A POLITICAL, MILITARY, OR POLITICAL/MILITARY NATURE. IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT WE KNOW WHOM TO CONTACT.

5. GENERAL LEE EXPLAINED THAT THE EVENTS OF LAST EVENING HAD MADE CHANGES IN THE MARTIAL LAW SITUATION: SOME PEOPLE SAID THIS INCREASED HIS POWER, OTHERS SAID IT DID NOT. LEGALLY HE REMAINED UNDER CIVILIAN CONTROL, BUT THE LEVEL OF AUTHORITY DIRECTING HIS ACTIONS HAS CHANGED, AND, AS A PRACTICAL MATTER, HE NOW EXERCISED CONTROL OVER PART OF THE CABINET AND REGIONAL OFFICIALS.

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EXDIS

6. I ASKED ABOUT REPORTED ARRESTS OF MAJOR POLITICAL FIGURES AND ASKED IF HE COULD ENLIGHTEN ME. HE SAID THAT THE PEOPLE INVOLVED WERE NOT UNDER ARREST. HE HAD GIVEN APPROVAL FOR THE "INVESTIGATION" OF TWO GENERAL TYPES OF PEOPLE: THOSE INVOLVED IN INCITING THE STUDENTS; AND THOSE ACCUSED BY THE STUDENTS AND OTHERS OF BEING CORRUPT. HE HAD PROVIDED NO NAMES WITH THESE INSTRUCTIONS AND PRESIDENT CHOI HAD APPROVED.

7. GENERAL LEE WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE WOULD CONDUCT HIS MISSION AS A SOLDIER, SINCE HE WAS NEITHER DIPLOMAT, BUREAUCRAT, OR POLITICIAN. AS FOR THE CHANGES OF LAST NIGHT, HE SAID UP TO THAT POINT - IN PRACTICAL TERMS - HIS AUTHORITY WAS LIMITED TO PRESS CENSORSHIP -- BEYOND THAT HE HAD NO REAL FUNCTION. WHILE THERE MIGHT BE NO CHANGE IN HIS ACTUAL AUTHORITY, THE EVENTS OF LAST NIGHT WOULD CHANGE THE PERCEPTION OF THE PEOPLE AND THE INTELLECTUAL COMMUNITY WHO THOUGHT HIS POWER WAS LIMITED. THE ECONOMY AND OTHER MATTERS WERE IN HIS HAND.

8. LEE NOTED THAT WHILE I RESIDED IN KOREA AND HAD A POSITION WHICH ALLOWED ME TO HEAR MANY THINGS ABOUT WHAT PEOPLE WANTED, I WAS NOT BORN HERE, COULD NOT KNOW THE PEOPLE, LOVE THE COUNTRY, OR REALLY KNOW WHAT THE PEOPLE WANTED, AS COULD A NATIVE SON. HE SAID THE PEOPLE WHO
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TALKED TO ME WANTED TO USE ME AND, THEREFORE, OUR VIEW OF THE SITUATION WAS SOMETIMES INCORRECT AND SOMETIMES OVER-

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DRAWN. AS A NATIVE SON, HE HAD HEARD FROM PEOPLE CONCERNED ABOUT STUDENTS IN THE STREETS AND CONCERNED ABOUT THE DOWNTURN IN THE ECONOMY AND THEIR QUESTION WAS "WHY COULD THE MARTIAL LAW AUTHORITIES NOT COPE WITH THESE MATTERS". SUCH COMPLAINTS HAD BECOME MORE VOCAL SINCE THE STUDENT RIOTS, WHICH WERE SEEN AS SERIOUS AND SYSTEMATICALLY ORGANIZED. ON STUDYING THE STUDENTS' STATEMENT ISSUED FOLLOWING THE MEETING AT KORYO UNIVERSITY, HE HAD BECOME CONCERNED OVER THE COMMUNIST TERMINOLOGY. THE STATEMENT URGED CLASS STRUGGLE, DENOUNCED THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM, SUPPORTED COMMUNIST THEMES, AND CALLED FOR A MASS UPRISING OF THE PEOPLE.

9. IN AMPLIFICATION OF THIS POINT, GENERAL LEE SAID THAT STUDENTS WHO HAD INITIALLY REFUSED MILITARY TRAINING BUT LATER RECONSIDERED HAD BEEN TAKEN TO THE THIRD MILITARY ACADEMY. SEVERAL STATEMENTS HEARD FROM THESE STUDENTS CAUSED SERIOUS CONCERN. ONE SAID THAT WHILE VIETNAM HAD CHANGED ITS SYSTEM AND MIGHT NOT HAVE ACHIEVED DEMOCRACY, AT LEAST THE COUNTRY HAD BEEN UNIFIED. ANOTHER STUDENT HAD SUGGESTED MODIFICATION IN THE ROK TO A SYSTEM BETWEEN THE PRESENT ONE HERE AND THAT IN THE NORTH TO ACHIEVE UNIFICATION. ANOTHER STUDENT HAD QUESTIONED ROK SUPPORT FOR U.S. AND JAPANESE CAPITALISTS. WHEN ASKED WHERE THEY HAD LEARNED SUCH THINGS, 50 PERCENT OF THE STUDENTS SAID FROM OLDER STUDENTS AND 20 PERCENT SAID FROM THE SOCIETIES AND CLUBS ON THEIR CAMPUSES. THESE WERE STUDENTS WITH ONLY TWO MONTHS OF UNIVERSITY AND HE WAS VERY CONCERNED OVER THIS TYPE OF THINKING TAKING HOLD SO QUICKLY ON THE NATION'S CAMPUSES. IF IT WERE NOT CONTROLLED, LEE FEARED THE ROK WOULD BE COMMUNIZED IN A MANNER SIMILAR
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TO VIETNAM.

10. GIVEN THIS WORRY, THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENSE CALLED A MEETING OF 40 SENIOR ARMY OFFICERS ON MAY 17 TO REVIEW THE SITUATION. EACH OF THESE SENIOR OFFICERS HAD BEEN GIVEN A CHANCE TO EXPRESS HIS VIEWS AND TO MAKE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS. THE MEETING LASTED FROM 1040 IN THE MORNING UNTIL 1430 IN THE AFTERNOON WITHOUT A LUNCH BREAK. THE GENERAL SAID WHEN I HAD CALLED ON SECRETARY GENERAL CHOI AT THE BLUE HOUSE THE MILITARY LEADERS HAD BEEN WAITING TO SEE THE PRESIDENT. THUS, WHEN I TALKED TO

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CHOI, HE HAD BEEN UNAWARE OF THE PROPOSED ACTION. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT IT HAD TAKEN THE PRESIDENT A LONG TIME **TO MAKE HIS DECISION. IN CONVINCING HIM ONE OF THE MOST** EFFECTIVE ARGUMENTS HAD BEEN THAT LARGE DEMONSTRATIONS WOULD HAVE REQUIRED THE WITHDRAWAL OF TROOPS FROM THE DMZ FOR CONTROL PURPOSES AND WOULD HAVE GREATLY INCREASED THE DANGER OF A NORTH KOREAN ATTACK. THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS OVER THE PAST FEW DAYS HAD CONSISTENTLY URGED STRONGER ACTIONS AGAINST THE STUDENTS BY THE MILITARY, BUT THIS HAD BEEN REFUSED BY THE MILITARY. HOWEVER, HAD LARGE DEMONSTRATIONS OCCURRED ON THE 19TH, THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN TOO BIG FOR THE POLICE TO HANDLE AND THE MILITARY WOULD HAVE BEEN INVOLVED. LEE SAID THIS FACT GREATLY INFLUENCED HIS DECISION TO AGREE WITH THE CURRENT POLICY.

11. YESTERDAY 100 STUDENT LEADERS MET AT EPHA UNIVERSITY. THEIR DEMANDS WERE BEYOND THE POWER OF THE PRESIDENT TO MEET. INCLUDED IN THEIR STATEMENT WAS THE POSITION THAT IF THERE WAS NO ADEQUATE RESPONSE BY MAY 20 STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS WOULD RECOMMENCE AND WOULD INCLUDE VIOLENCE.

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EXDIS

UNTIL NOW, ALMOST ALL COLLEGES WERE INVOLVED IN THE DEMONSTRATIONS AND THERE WERE INDICATIONS THAT THE HIGH SCHOOLS MIGHT ALSO JOIN. IN SUCH AN EVENT, TEN DIVISIONS WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENT TO CONTAIN THE EXPECTED DEMONSTRATORS. MILITARY LEADERS INFORMED THE PRESIDENT OF THESE FACTS AND OF THEIR OPINION THAT, IF DEMONSTRATIONS ACCELERATED TO THAT DEGREE, THE NORTH KOREANS WOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE. IN LIGHT OF THE ABOVE, THE PRESIDENT LAST NIGHT APPROVED THE EXPANSION OF MARTIAL LAW.

12. GENERAL LEE SAID HE ASSUMED WE WERE CONCERNED, THAT AS A RESULT OF LAST NIGHT'S ACTIONS, THERE MIGHT BE A MILITARY DICTATORSHIP OR THAT THE POLITICAL TIMETABLE WOULD NOT BE FOLLOWED. HE ASKED IF THAT WAS A CORRECT ASSUMPTION. I SAID THAT HE WAS CORRECT TO SOME EXTENT IN IDENTIFYING OUR CONCERN, BUT I WISHED TO PROVIDE A GENERAL ANSWER AND COMMENT ON CERTAIN THINGS THAT HE HAD SAID ABOUT THE U.S. WE REALIZED THAT WE WERE IN KOREA AND WE ALSO REMEMBERED THAT WE WERE AMERICANS. WE REALIZED THAT WE COULD NEVER UNDERSTAND KOREAN MATTERS AS WELL AS NATIVE KOREANS. WE WERE ALSO AWARE THAT MANY KOREANS, CIVILIAN AND MILITARY, ATTEMPTED TO USE BOTH THE EMBASSY AND THE USG FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES. HOWEVER, WE ARE VERY MUCH AWARE OF WHAT SUCH PEOPLE ARE ABOUT. I WENT ON TO SAY WE HAD A NATIONAL INTEREST IN PREVENTING WAR ON THE
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KOREAN PENINSULA REQUIRING A LARGE U.S. SECURITY PRESENCE HERE. THIS IN TURN LED TO OUR CONCERN WITH POLITICAL

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STABILITY. POLITICAL STABILITY CONSISTED OF TWO ELEMENTS: POLITICAL ORDER BUT ALSO THE HOPES OF THE KOREAN PEOPLE FOR PROGRESS. THE BALANCE BETWEEN ORDER AND CHANGE WAS A KOREAN JUDGMENT. FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW, WHAT WAS ACCEPTABLE TO THE KOREAN PEOPLE WAS WHAT WOULD BRING ABOUT STABILITY AND BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE USG. WE BELIEVED THAT THE PEOPLE WANTED ORDER AND DID NOT AGREE WITH THE RECENT STUDENT ACTION. HOWEVER, THEY ALSO WANTED A DEGREE OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT. SPECIFICALLY ANSWERING THE QUESTION HE HAD POSED, I SAID IT DID NOT MATTER WHAT I THOUGHT, BUT IT DID MATTER WHAT THE KOREAN PEOPLE THOUGHT. THEREFORE, WE HOPED FUTURE ACTIONS WOULD REASSURE THE KOREAN PEOPLE ON BOTH THE QUESTION OF CHANGE AND THE QUESTION OF PUBLIC ORDER'

13. GENERAL LEE SAID ALL KOREANS WERE AWARE OF WHAT THEIR ALLY, THE U.S., LIKED AND DID NOT LIKE WITH REGARD TO ACTIONS BY THE MILITARY. THUS, EVEN WHEN FACED WITH AN ISSUE OF NATIONAL SURVIVAL -- WHETHER TO BE TAKEN OVER BY THE COMMUNISTS -- RESPONSIBLE ROK OFFICIALS HAD TO BALANCE THEIR ACTIONS AGAINST THE U.S. RESPONSE. IF THE POTENTIAL FOR NATIONAL DISTURBANCE REACHED TOO HIGH A POINT, THEN IT MIGHT BE NECESSARY TO TAKE ACTIONS DISPLEASING TO THE U.S. LEE SAID HE WAS SURE EVEN THE U.S. WOULD NOT WANT HIS GOVERNMENT TO GO TO THE EXTREME OF RISKING THE FALL OF HIS NATION.

14. GENERAL LEE CLAIMED THAT PRESIDENT CHOI WAS A DIPLOMAT, CAUTIOUS, PRUDENT, AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE U.S. THUS, FOR THE MILITARY TO MAKE THE RECOMMENDATIONS THEY DID AND FOR THE PRESIDENT TO APPROVE THEM NEEDED TO BE

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TAKEN FULLY INTO ACCOUNT. THE PRESIDENT HAD GIVEN HIS APPROVAL FREELY WITHOUT DURESS. HE SAID HE WOULD BE SEEING THE PRESIDENT IN THE AFTERNOON, WOULD PASS ON MY VIEWS, AND THEY WOULD AGAIN REVIEW THE DECISION.

15. LEE PICKED UP ON THE FOUR THINGS OVER THE PAST SEVEN MONTHS WHICH I HAD NOTED AS CAUSING CONFUSION AS TO WHO WAS IN CHARGE. HE SAID THE KOREAN PEOPLE WERE WORRIED ABOUT ONE OF THEM, I.E. THE RECENT APPOINTMENT OF CHUN DOO HWAN AS ACTING KCIA DIRECTOR. STEPS HAD BEEN TAKEN TO CONVINCING THE PEOPLE THAT THIS WAS NECESSARY, "BUT HAD

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NOT BEEN SUCCESSFUL". SINCE OCTOBER 26, THE KOREAN PEOPLE HAVE WANTED TWO THINGS: POLITICS BY PATRIOTS; AND POLITICAL LEADERS FREE FROM GRAFT. IF THESE TWO DESIRES COULD BE MET, THINGS WOULD DEVELOP IN AN ACCEPTABLE WAY.

16. I TOLD GENERAL LEE AGAIN THAT I DID NOT WANT TO ARGUE, BUT DID WANT TO CORRECT ONE OF HIS STATEMENTS. WHAT CONCERNED THE U.S. WAS NOT THAT THE ROK DID NOT DO WHAT THE U.S. WANTED IT TO DO; OUR CONCERN WAS SOLELY THAT THE GOVERNMENT BEHAVE IN A MANNER THAT ACCORDED WITH THE DESIRES OF THE KOREAN PEOPLE. IN THIS REGARD, WE WERE NOT AS SURE AS GENERAL LEE WAS THAT IT HAD DONE SO.

17. GENERAL LEE SAID HE WAS SURE THE U.S. ALSO TOOK THE DESIRES OF ITS PEOPLE INTO ACCOUNT IN FRAMING ITS POLICY. HE SAID THAT DEMOCRACY HAS OFTEN TAKEN TWO FORMS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. IN THE LATIN AMERICAN MODEL, IT HAS LED TO A SERIES OF MILITARY DICTATORSHIPS. IN KOREA IT HAD LED IN THE 1960'S TO STUDENT REVOLUTION. HE ASSURED ME THAT AS LONG AS HE WAS MARTIAL LAW COMMANDER NEITHER OF THESE TWO DEVELOPMENTS WOULD TAKE PLACE IN THE ROK.

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18. I ENDED THE MEETING WITH THE GENERAL BY TELLING HIM THAT I RESPECTED HIM AS A SOLDIER AND WISHED TO MAKE MY VIEWS KNOWN NOT TO HIM PERSONALLY BUT THROUGH HIM, IN HIS ROLE AS MARTIAL LAW COMMANDER, TO THE PROPER AUTHORITIES. GENERAL LEE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THIS AND THAT I COULD ALWAYS CONTACT HIM, EITHER THROUGH OUR LIAISON PERSONNEL OR THROUGH CALLING ON HIM DIRECTLY.

19. COMMENT: GENERAL LEE TOOK A RELATIVELY HIGH POSTURE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE MEETING, BUT WAS PROGRESSIVELY BETTER AS WE PROCEEDED. HIS POSITIONS WERE "PURE YUSHIN". HE HAD SOME DIFFICULTY FOLLOWING THE MORE GENERAL PARTS OF MY PRESENTATION, BUT WAS MOST ATTENTIVE TO DETAILS OF ACTIONS WE INTENDED TAKING. HIS COMMENT ON THE RESPONSE **TO THE NEW ACTING DIRECTOR OF KCIA (PARA 15) WAS INTRIGUING**, BUT I DECIDED NOT TO PURSUE IT. IN SUM, GENERAL LEE GAVE THE APPEARANCE OF A MAN CONFIDENT IN HIS POSITION AND THE POLICY LINE HE WAS FOLLOWING. GLEYSTEN

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