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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 SEOUL 08159

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E.O. 12065: RDS-1 6/25/00 (GLEYSTEN, W.H.) OR-M
TAGS: PGOV, PEPR, SHUM, PINT, KS, US
SUBJECT: KOREA FOCUS: JUNE 25 TALK WITH BLUE HOUSE SYG

REF: A. STATE 163085, B. STATE 162988, C. STATE 163106

1. (S) ENTIRE TEXT.

2. BEGIN SUMMARY: TO KEEP BLUE HOUSE IN THE ACT, I CALLED ON SECRETARY GENERAL CHOI JUNE 25 TO GO OVER SOME OF THE POINTS I INTEND TO MAKE WITH CHUN DOO HWAN TOMORROW (REFTELS). I STRESSED THAT WE: (A) WOULD BE WATCHING CAREFULLY HOW AND WHETHER THE NEW AUTHORITIES ACHIEVED ACCEPTANCE AMONG THE KOREAN PEOPLE; (B) WERE DISTURBED BY ANTI-AMERICAN MANIFESTATIONS AMONG SOME ELEMENTS OF THE REGIME AS WELL AS IN OPPOSITION/DISSIDENT QUARTERS; AND (C) BELIEVED GENERAL CHUN AND COLLEAGUES DID NOT ADEQUATELY APPRECIATE THE DANGERS TO KOREA OF AN EROSION IN FRIENDLY RELATIONS EVEN WHILE BASIC SECURITY AND ECONOMIC TIES CONTINUED TO BIND US. TO SOME EXTENT ACKNOWLEDGING ALL MY POINTS, CHOI URGED THAT WE STAY IN CONTACT WITH THE NEW AUTHORITIES -- SPEAKING QUITE BLUNTLY TO THEM IN PRIVATE WHILE AVOIDING ANTAGONIZING THEM THROUGH PUBLIC ACTIONS SUCH AS OUR ABSTENTION IN THE ADB. HE ADMITTED

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A GROWTH IN UNHELPFUL ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE U.S. AMONG SOME RADICALS WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS REALLY ANTI-AMERICAN AND SOME OF THE MILITARY WHO WERE EXCESSIVELY NATIONALISTIC AND NAIVE BUT EDUCATABLE. HE PROMISED THE ROKG WOULD DO

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: CHARLES E LAHIGUERA
DATE/CASE ID: 13 JAN 2012 201101232

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115 DESI TO CONTROL THE SITUATION. WITHOUT INDICATING HIS OWN VIEWS, CHOI SAID CHUN HAS IN MIND CONDUCTING A REFERENDUM UNDER MARTIAL LAW AND PERFORMING SOME MORE "POLITICAL SURGERY" BEFORE THE STAGE IS SET THIS SUMMER FOR THE NEW POLITICAL ARRANGEMENTS. HE SEEMED TO ASSUME THE USG WOULD CONTINUE TO ARGUE STRONGLY IN FAVOR OF MODERATION AND LIBERAL DEVELOPMENT. I INFERRED THAT HE APPROVED OF OUR DOING SO. END SUMMARY.

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3. PARTLY TO KEEP THE BLUE HOUSE GENERALLY INFORMED OF OUR DEALINGS WITH GENERAL CHUN DOO HWAN (M-R: CHON TU-HWAN) AND PARTLY TO SEE WHAT HE MIGHT HAVE TO SAY IN ADVANCE OF MY DEPARTING TO SEE THE SECRETARY, I CALLED ON BLUE HOUSE SYG KWANG SOO CHOI (M-R: CH'OE KWANG-SU) JUNE 25. WITHOUT GOING INTO DETAIL I CONVEYED THE GIST OF THE REFTEL INSTRUCTIONS. I EXPLAINED THAT: (A) WHILE WE HAD STRONG VIEWS ON MATTERS SUCH AS HOLDING A REFERENDUM UNDER MARTIAL LAW, OUR BASIC CONCERN WAS THAT ANY NEW POLITICAL ARRANGEMENTS IN KOREA BE DEVELOPED IN A WAY WHICH WAS ACCEPTABLE TO THE KOREAN PEOPLE; (B) I FEARED CHUN DOO HWAN AND HIS MILITARY COLLEAGUES DID NOT FULLY APPRECIATE THE DAMAGE THAT COULD BE CAUSED TO THE US/ROK RELATIONSHIP THROUGH EROSION EVEN WHILE THE U.S. ADHERED TO ITS BASIC SECURITY AND ECONOMIC TIES WITH KOREA; AND (C) WE WERE PARTICULARLY DISTURBED BY SOME ANTI-AMERICAN MANEUVERING WITHIN THE REGIME QUITE APART FROM ANTI-AMERICAN CRITICISM IN OPPOSITION/DISSIDENT QUARTERS.

4. CHOI ACKNOWLEDGED THE VALIDITY OF POINT A AND SAID IT SECRET

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WAS UP TO THE ROK AUTHORITIES TO DEMONSTRATE THROUGH ACTIONS RATHER THAN WORDS THAT THEY COULD MEET THEIR PEOPLE'S DEMANDS. WITHOUT WISHING TO SOUND OPTIMISTIC HE FELT THIS COULD BE DONE, ALTHOUGH THE NEXT POLITICAL PHASE WAS GOING TO BE VERY DIFFICULT AND PERHAPS TURBULENT. HE SAID GENERAL CHUN STILL HAD IN MIND CONDUCTING A REFERENDUM UNDER MARTIAL LAW. CHOI FELT IT APPROPRIATE AND EVEN BENEFICIAL IF WE EXPRESSED OUR STRONG VIEWS ON THE POLITICAL ISSUES BLUNTLY TO THE KOREAN AUTHORITIES IN PRIVATE; URGED THAT WE MAINTAIN A GOOD CROSS SECTION OF CONTACTS WITH THE NEW AUTHORITIES, SPECIFICALLY INCLUDING CHUN; AND REFRAIN FROM PUBLIC CRITICISM WHICH WAS LIKELY TO BE MISUNDERSTOOD AND CREATE ANTAGONISM AMONG THE GENERALS. HE REFERRED TO THE ADB ABSTENTION AS AN EXAMPLE OF AN ILL-DVISED U.S. ACTION. I SAID WE WOULD DO OUR

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BEST TO KEEP OUR ADVICE PRIVATE, BUT OUR LAWS AND VARIOUS AUDIENCES IN THE U.S. AND KOREA REQUIRED THAT WE TAKE CERTAIN ACTIONS, SUCH AS THE ADB ABSTENTION, AND MAKE OUR BASIC POSITION CLEAR. I NOTED IN PASSING THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD BE TESTIFYING BEFORE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES, AND THE ROKG SHOULD KEEP IN MIND THAT THIS WAS THE WAY OUR GOVERNMENT WAS RUN.

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5. CHOI DISCUSSED THE ANTI-AMERICAN ISSUE AT LENGTH, NOTING THE GROWTH OF RADICAL SENTIMENT IN SOME OPPOSITION/DISSIDENT CIRCLES, WHICH HAD AN ANTI-AMERICAN FLAVOR. IN ADDITION, THERE WAS ON THE RIGHT, ESPECIALLY AMONG SOME YOUNGER MILITARY OFFICERS, A NATIONALISTIC REACTION AGAINST "U.S. MEDDLING", LEADING TO SOME UNFORTUNATE BEHAVIOR. CHOI ASSURED ME FIRMLY THAT BOTH THE BLUE HOUSE AND THE SENIOR MILITARY AUTHORITIES WANTED TO HOLD

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DOWN THE GROWTH OF ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT AND PREVENT ANY ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES. HE FELT CONFIDENT THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO EDUCATE SIMPLISTIC MILITARY OFFICERS INTO RECOGNIZING THE FACTS OF LIFE. I COMMENTED THAT I WAS NOT PARTICULARLY WORRIED ABOUT RADICAL SENTIMENT, AT LEAST AT THIS STAGE, AND RECOGNIZED KOREAN FRUSTRATION BECAUSE OF THEIR DEPENDENCY ON THE U.S. WE HAD COPED SUCCESSFULLY WITH THESE ISSUES IN THE PAST AND PRESUMABLY COULD IN THE FUTURE IF BOTH OUR GOVERNMENTS RECOGNIZED THE PROBLEM AND WORKED ACTIVELY TO MANAGE TRICKY EMOTIONS.

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UNFORTUNATELY, SOME PEOPLE IN THE CURRENT ADMINISTRATION WERE NOT COOPERATING IN THIS REGARD AND WERE PLAYING WITH FIRE. IF WE IDENTIFIED INDIVIDUALS WHO WERE MANIPULATING ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT WE WOULD BE FORCED TO TAKE A VERY NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD THEM. I HOPED CHOI WOULD HELP GET THIS MESSAGE ACROSS.

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6. TOWARD THE END OF OUR CONVERSATION, CHOI SAID WE SHOULD BRACE OURSELVES FOR SOME MORE "POLITICAL SURGERY" AMONG POLITICIANS BOTH ON THE GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION SIDE. WITHOUT MAKING MUCH ATTEMPT TO JUSTIFY WHAT WAS GOING ON, HE SAID THE MILITARY AUTHORITIES WERE NOT YET SATISFIED THAT THEY HAD CLEANSED THE POLITICAL SCENE ADEQUATELY. CHOI WAS CONFIDENT THE SURGERY WOULD NOT BE

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CARRIED TO EXTREMES AND WOULD BE CONDUCTED IN A "CONSTITUTIONAL MANNER". WITH ITS COMPLETION IN JULY, THE POLITICAL PROCESS WOULD BEGIN TO RESUME.

7. CHOI NOTED THAT HE HAD BEEN STRONGLY DISCOURAGING WOULD-BE EMISSARIES TO THE U.S. WHO WANTED TO RUSH OFF AND TRY TO EXPLAIN EVERYTHING AWAY TO VARIOUS AMERICAN AUDIENCES. IT WAS VERY UNNATURAL FOR KOREANS TO REFRAIN FROM PROSELYTIZING EFFORTS, BUT IT WOULD OBVIOUSLY BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE TO TRY TO CONVINCING SKEPTICAL AMERICANS AT THIS STAGE. HE SAID HE KNEW I AGREED WITH HIM WHICH I CONFIRMED.

8. DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO EA ASSISTANT SECRETARY HOLBROOKE. GLEYSTEN

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