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E.O. 12065: RDS-1 11/21/00 (GLEYSTEN, W.H.) OR-M
TAGS: PEPR, PINT, SHUM, KS, US, JA
SUBJECT: KOREA FOCUS: NOVEMBER 21 CONVERSATION WITH
- PRESIDENT CHUN RE KIM DAE JUNG

REF: A. SEOUL 15600, B. SEOUL 15528

2. FOLLOWING AN EXTREMELY INTERESTING CONVERSATION WITH
GENERAL NO TAE U (M-R) (REF A), I HAD A THIRTY-MINUTE
TALK WITH PRESIDENT CHUN DOO HWAN (M-R: CHON TU-HWAN)
NOVEMBER 21 REGARDING KIM DAE JUNG (M-R: KIM TAE-CHUNG).
I TOLD HIM I WOULD DO MY BEST IN WASHINGTON TO PORTRAY
ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, AND SECURITY DEVELOPMENTS IN KOREA
IN A SYMPATHETIC WAY, BUT THERE WAS NO ESCAPING THE FACT
THAT ALL SENIOR PEOPLE WITH WHOM I WOULD MEET -- DEMOCRATIC
OR REPUBLICAN -- WOULD FOCUS ON THE KIM DAE JUNG ISSUE.
RATHER THAN REITERATE ALL THE POINTS I HAD MADE TO
GENERAL NO AT LUNCH, I WANTED TO EMPHASIZE THAT WITH NEW
GOVERNMENTS IN KOREA AND IN THE U.S. IN 1981 THERE WOULD
BE A RATHER UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO ESTABLISH A HEALTHY
RELATIONSHIP AND A DEGREE OF RAPPORT WHICH HAD BEEN
ABSENT IN OUR RELATIONS BECAUSE OF SERIOUS STRAINS DURING
THE 1970'S. IF KIM DAE JUNG WERE EXECUTED, HOWEVER,
THIS OPPORTUNITY WOULD BE LOST. NO MATTER WHAT THE DE-

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SIRS OF THE NEW U.S. ADMINISTRATION MIGHT BE, THE ROKG
WOULD FIND THAT ITS AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP HAD AGAIN SOURED
WITH GREAT DAMAGE TO OUR MUTUAL INTERESTS. I MADE CLEAR
THAT I WAS NOT ARGUING ABOUT THE FACTS OF THE KIM DAE JUNG

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: CHARLES E LAHIGUERA
DATE/CASE ID: 18 JAN 2012 201101232

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ACKNOWLEDGED ON THE BASIS OF MY OWN CONTACTS IN KOREA THAT THERE WAS DIVERGENCE OF OPINION AND CONTROVERSY ABOUT KIM DAE JUNG, ESPECIALLY IN THE KOREAN ARMY, WHICH WOULD COMPLICATE THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION.

3. PRESIDENT CHUN REITERATED POINTS HE HAS MADE TO ME BEFORE: I.E., THAT AMERICANS MUST NOT APPLY AMERICAN VALUES TO KOREAN PROBLEMS, THAT IT MIGHT BE SOME TIME BEFORE KOREA HAD THE LEVEL OF DEMOCRACY FOUND IN THE U.S., THAT THE KIM DAE JUNG CASE AROUSED INTENSE FEELINGS AMONG VERY IMPORTANT GROUPS OF KOREANS, THAT THE CASE WAS STILL UNDER JUDICIAL REVIEW. HE SAID HE APPRECIATED MY RAISING THE QUESTION WITH HIM BECAUSE HE WANTED ME WHILE IN WASHINGTON TO EMPHASIZE SEVERAL POINTS. FIRST, I SHOULD EXPLAIN TO MY SENIORS THAT HE WAS FACED WITH AN EXTREMELY COMPLEX DECISION. HE DID NOT QUESTION THE INTENSITY OF INTERNATIONAL FEELINGS, BUT HE ALSO HAD TO CONSIDER THE ATTITUDES OF HIS OWN PEOPLE. SECOND, I SHOULD URGE THAT THE USG MAINTAIN ITS POLICY OF PUBLIC RESTRAINT. FEELINGS WERE SO STRONG IN SOME QUARTERS (PRESUMABLY THE ARMY) THAT IF WE LECTURED HIM THROUGH OFFICIAL STATEMENTS, IT WOULD ANTAGONIZE ELEMENTS HERE AND "REDUCE MY OPTIONS". FINALLY, HE REMINDED ME THAT HE WOULD MAKE HIS DECISION ON THE ISSUE OF CLEMENCY IN TERMS OF WHAT HE THOUGHT WAS BEST FOR KOREAN STABILITY. IF HE MADE THE WRONG DECISION OR HANDLED THE MATTER INCORRECTLY, HE SAID, IT COULD LEAD TO DOMESTIC UNREST IN KOREA OF A KIND FAR MORE DAMAGING THAN THIS PAST YEAR.

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4. I ASSURED THE PRESIDENT I WOULD DO MY BEST TO SUSTAIN OUR POLICY OF PUBLIC RESTRAINT. I ALSO AGREED THAT HE SHOULD MAKE HIS ULTIMATE DECISION IN TERMS OF KOREA'S NATIONAL INTEREST, RECOGNIZING, HOWEVER, THAT KOREA'S RELATIONS WITH THE OUTER WORLD WERE AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THOSE INTERESTS. THE PRESIDENT SEEMED TO AGREE.

5. COMMENT: I THINK IT DANGEROUS TO OVERINTERPRET MY CONVERSATIONS TODAY WITH GENERAL NO AND PRESIDENT CHUN. THEY LEAVE ME LESS PESSIMISTIC THAN WHEN I WROTE MY ASSESSMENT YESTERDAY (REF B), BUT THEY ALSO REVEAL THAT PRESIDENT CHUN AND HIS COLLEAGUES HAVE AN EXTREMELY DELICATE TASK BEFORE THEM. MY LESSENER PESSIMISM DOES NOT CHANGE MY RECOMMENDATIONS AS TO HOW WE SHOULD PROCEED. I AM MORE INCLINED, HOWEVER, TO RECOMMEND

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