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BENTEL JOHN A
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ACTION SS-25
INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-20 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O P 230457Z AUG 75
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2303
INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY
USMISSION IAEA VIENNA
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DECAPTIONED

EXDIS
E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: EFIN ETRD MNUC TECH PARM KS HA TH CH
SUBJECT: ROK NUCLEAR FUEL REPROCESSING PLANS
REF: STATE 195214

1. PURSUANT REFTTEL INSTRUCTIONS AMBASSADOR CALLED ON MINISTER SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY CHOE HYUNG SUP AUGUST 23 ACCOMPANIED BY ERDA SCIREP AND EMBASSY POLMIL OFFICER.
2. AFTER NOTING THAT THERE WAS STRONG POSITIVE DESIRE IN WASHINGTON TO STRENGTHEN COOPERATIVE USG-ROK NUCLEAR AND OTHER ENERGY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND PLANS AND REASSURING CHOE THAT WE WOULD LIVE UP TO OUR COMMITMENTS ON FUEL SUPPLY IN ACCORD WITH RECENT PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT, AMBASSADOR REVIEWED HIGH COSTS AND TECHNICAL RISKS INVOLVED IN CONSTRUCTING SPENT FUEL REPROCESSING PLANT. HE THEN PROCEEDED TO MAKE POINTS 5A THROUGH F CONTAINED REFTTEL.
3. AMBASSADOR SAID THAT AFTER VERY CAREFUL REVIEW USG HAD CONCLUDED ROKS HAD NO REAL REQUIREMENT FOR REPROCESSING PLANT AND THAT COST AND TECHNICAL RISK FACTORS ARGUED AGAINFT

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ROK ACQUISITION THIS CAPABILITY. AS ROKS THEMSELVES HAD EARLIER CONCLUDED, AMBASSADOR URGED AS BEST COURSE JOINT EXPLORATION OF POSSIBILITIES FOR MULTILATERAL REPROCESSING FACILITY. AMBASSADOR UNDERLINED INCREASING CONCERN IN BOTH CONGRESS AND ADMINISTRATION OVER IMPLICATIONS OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROLIFERATION SHOULD ROK ACQUIRE REPROCESSING PLANT AND ESCALATING IMPETUS SUCH ACQUISITION MIGHT GIVE NORTH KOREAN EFFORTS TO OBTAIN NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY FROM PRC AND USSR. HE SAID IT APPEARED UNLIKELY CONGRESS WOULD APPROVE KORI II LOAN UNLESS FRENCH REPROCESSING PLANT ACQUISITION CANCELLED. AMBASSADOR CONCLUDED BY REQUESTING ROKG CANCEL PLANS TO ACQUIRE FRENCH REPROCESSING PLANT. WHILE THIS CREATED DIFFICULT PROBLEMS FOR ROKG, AMBASSADOR CONCLUDED THAT CANCELLATION FRENCH DEAL WOULD OPEN WAY TO BROADER AND INTENSIFIED JOINT ROKG-USG ENERGY DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: CHARLES E LAHIGUERA
DATE/CASE ID: 20 MAY 2005 200403745

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AND EXPLORATION OF MULTILATERAL PROJECT. IF ROKG CONTINUED WITH FRENCH DEAL, FUTURE ENERGY COOPERATION WOULD BE IMPAIRED.

4. MINISTER CHOE RESPONDED TO ABOVE WITH EXPRESSION OF SURPRISE OVER EXTENT USG CONCERN. NOTING, AS HE HAS BEFORE, THAT FRENCH PLANT WAS BEING ACQUIRED ONLY AS LEARNING TOOL AND NOT FOR ITS PRODUCTION CAPABILITY, MINISTER PROMISED TO MAKE AVAILABLE ALL DATA REGARDING FRENCH PLANT. AMBASSADOR AND CHOE THEN AGREED TO MEETING BETWEEN ERDA SCIREP AND HEAD KOREA ATOMIC ENERGY RESEARCH INSTITUTE AUGUST 25 IN ORDER TO:

A. PROVIDE COMPLETE EXPLANATION OF FRENCH PROPOSAL AND EXPLAIN PURPOSE PLANT EXPECTED TO SERVE IN ROK NUCLEAR PROGRAM; AND

B. EXPLORE ALTERNATIVE POSSIBILITIES WHICH WOULD PROVIDE ROK WITH DESIRED TECHNICAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL GOALS WITHOUT RAISING QUESTION OF WEAPON PROLIFERATION. PENDING OUTCOME, AMBASSADOR SUGGESTED POSSIBILITY OF HIGH LEVEL TECHNICAL US TEAM VISIT TO ROK FOR FURTHER DISCUSSIONS.

4. AMBASSADOR CONCLUDED THAT BASIC USG INTEREST AND PURPOSE IN MAKING THIS REQUEST WAS TO OPEN WAY WHOLE AREA OF ENERGY AND SCIENCE COOPERATION. HE ASKED THAT CHOE CONVEY SUBSTANCE OF MESSAGE TO OTHERS IN ROKG AND INDICATED HE WOULD BE CALLING ON ACTING FONMIN AUGUST 25 REGARDING THIS QUESTION.

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COMMENT: WHILE THIS INITIAL RESPONSE NOT ANTAGONISTIC, CHOE NOTABLY MADE NO COMMITMENT EXCEPT TO EXAMINE ALTERNATIVES.

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