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Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : FE - Mr. Robertson

Bureau of
FAR EASTERN AFFAIRS
MAY 23 1957
1994
ASSISTANT SECRETARY
Department of State

DATE: MAY 23 1957

FROM : NA - Mr. Parsons *WSP*

SUBJECT: ROK Reaction and Expectations Should U. S. Forces in Korea be given Nuclear Weapons.

The Koreans can be expected to react favorably to United States actions in modernizing United States forces in Korea, including the equipping of our forces with weapons of atomic capability. The Korean reaction to recent statements regarding the possibility of introducing atomic-capable weapons into Korea reflects growing ROK expectations, however, that modernization, including atomic-capable weapons, will also cover ROK forces. Since the United States does not intend, at least at present, to equip ROK forces with modern weapons, but will confine such modernization to signal and transportation equipment plus an increase by one jet wing of the ROK Air Force, we can expect a serious political problem to develop in United States - ROK relations over this issue. In view of Korean expectations that ROK forces will also receive more modern weapons, it will be extremely difficult to convince the Korean Government, particularly President Rhee, that the modernization of United States forces should be accompanied by the reduction of the ROK Army by four divisions.

Equipping ROK forces with weapons of atomic capability was included in one of the four alternative courses of action considered in connection with revision of the Korea policy paper and the field has apparently given consideration to equipping ROK forces with at least token units of atomic capability. The FY 1957 - 1958 Military Assistance Program recommendations from the military advisory groups in Korea included, for example, three field artillery rocket batteries of 762 mm rockets, a dual-capability weapon. The Joint Chiefs of Staff disapproved inclusion of this item in the program pending a decision regarding the introduction of weapons of dual capability in general. It is possible that the Joint Chiefs of Staff will consider the future inclusion of such weapons in the Military Assistance Program should the decision be made to equip United States forces with these weapons.

One of the principal arguments used in supporting the necessity of introducing more modern weapons into Korea, including weapons of atomic capability, has been that weapons and equipment presently in Korea are obsolete, no longer in production, and spare parts are no longer manufactured, etc. The reorganization of United States ground forces into pentomic divisions is another argument. Because of these

development.

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developments, it is further argued, it is impractical and unrealistic to continue maintaining in Korea two United States divisions patterned and equipped on a 1953 basis. However, only two United States divisions are affected by this situation, whereas the ROK Army, which is mainly equipped and supported by the United States, consists of twenty divisions, or will consist of sixteen if the contemplated reduction is achieved. These arguments will be presented forcefully by the Koreans. Also, plans to provide nuclear weapons to certain of our NATO Allies will certainly not go unnoticed by them.

ROK expectations with respect to modernization, reinforced by statements such as Secretary Wilson's and possibly by encouragement on the part of United States military authorities in Korea, will almost certainly lead to continued and stronger demands on the part of President Rhee and the ROK Government and military for the equipping of ROK forces with weapons of atomic capability should United States forces in Korea be so equipped.

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FE - Mr. Jones

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