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Declassified Case:
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EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

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NODIS CHEROKEE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EFIN, ETRD, NMUC, TECH, PARM, KS, HA, TH, CH

SUBJECT: ROK NUCLEAR REPROCESSING PLANS

1. I HAVE NOW COMPLETED THE FIRST ROUND IN OUR APPROACH TO THE KOREAN GOVERNMENT TO CANCEL PURCHASE OF FRENCH NUCLEAR REPROCESSING PLANT. WHILE OFFICIAL KOREAN GOVERNMENT RESPONSE HAS NOT YET BEEN GIVEN TO ME, AUTHORITATIVE REACTIONS ALREADY ON HAND ARE SUFFICIENTLY DISTURBING TO WARRANT SEEKING FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS FROM YOU BEFORE BEARDING PRESIDENT PARK, PERSONALLY.

2. IN ESSENCE, I HAVE BEEN WARNED BY DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, WHO IS AS SOUND AND ACCURATE A WEATHERVANE AS ONE CAN FIND HERE, THAT IF WE PRESS OUR POSITION IT IS LIKELY TO LEAD TO VERY SERIOUS CONFRONTATION WITH PRESIDENT PARK. IN FACT, TOP KOREAN OFFICIALS ARE SO FEARFUL OF PARK'S REACTIONS THAT HE HAS NOT YET BEEN BRIEFED ON MY APPROACH. (FOR DETAILS YOU MAY WISH TO SEE SEOUL 6859).

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3. KOREAN RATIONALE FOR REPROCESSING PLANT HAS BEEN REPORTED IN SEPARATE MESSAGES. BUT, ESSENCE OF KOREAN POSITION IS STRONG ELEMENT OF LOSS OF FACE AND NATIONAL PRIDE, RESENTMENT THAT WE ARE SINGLING THEM OUT WHILE THEIR JAPANESE NEIGHBORS AND OTHERS PURSUE REPROCESSING, AND SOME BEWILDERMENT WHY WE SHOULD BE SO GREATLY

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CONCERNED ABOUT FULLY SAFEGUARDED TECHNICAL TOOL WITH SUCH LITTLE POTENTIAL FOR PRODUCING WEAPONS GRADE PLUTONIUM. KOREANS HAVE ALREADY MADE CLEAR THAT, IF WE LACK TRUST, THEY ARE PREPARED TO GIVE UNLIMITED ACCESS TO FACILITY TO AMERICAN TECHNICIANS. NOT UNSURPRISINGLY, THEY RESENT OUR "ARM-TWISTING".

4. WE KNOW FROM OUR INTELLIGENCE THAT KOREANS ARE FLIRTING WITH FIRST STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT OF NUCLEAR CAPABILITY, BUT ARE A LONG WAY FROM GETTING IT. AVAILABILITY OF NUCLEAR REPROCESSING PLANT MAY HELP THIS EFFORT ALONG, BUT WE CAN MONITOR THIS OPERATION AND WILL HAVE OTHER OPPORTUNITIES TO UNDERCUT PROLIFERATION IF KOREANS GET TOO ADVANCED. PARK HAS FOR THE RECORD GIVEN SECRETARY SCHLESINGER HIS PERSONAL ASSURANCES ON NON-PROLIFERATION AND IS WELL AWARE OF RISKS INVOLVED IN PURSUING A NUCLEAR CAPABILITY.

5. PERSONALLY, I AM RELUCTANT TO FORCE REPROCESSING ISSUE-POINT OF MAJOR CONFRONTATION WITH PARK. WHICH IS INEVITABLE IF I NOW PRESS FURTHER WITH APPROACH BY GOING DIRECTLY TO HIM AND PRIME MINISTER. IF YOU CONCUR, I WOULD PREFER TO WAIT OUT OFFICIAL RESPONSE, WHICH IS LIKELY TO BE BASICALLY NEGATIVE. I WOULD THEN TEST OUT POSSIBILITIES OF SEEKING COMPROMISE SOLUTION, SHORT OF CONFRONTATION, WHILE GAINING SOME AMMUNITION TO DEAL WITH CONGRESSIONAL CRITICS. WOULD MUCH APPRECIATE YOUR PERSONAL GUIDANCE GIVEN STAKES RPT STAKES INVOLVED. SNEIDER

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