

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY SEOUL IMMEDIATE

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EXDIS TOKYO PASS ERDA REP HENOCH

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PFOR, MNUC, PARM, KS, CA

SUBJECT: ROK NUCLEAR REPROCESSING

REF: (A) SEOUL 0332; (B) SEOUL 0331; (C) STATE 08919

1. APPRECIATE REPORT OF YOUR DISCUSSION WITH DPM NAM AND YOUR EXCELLENT HANDLING OF HIS COMMENTS REGARDING ROK REACTION TO GROWING CANADIAN CONCERN WITH REPROCESSING PLANT. AS YOU CORRECTLY NOTED, GOC IS ACTING PRIMARILY ON BASIS ITS OWN CONSIDERATIONS.

2. AS YOU POINTED OUT TO NAM, SENIOR ROKG OFFICIALS MUST UNDERSTAND THAT PROLONGED DELAY IN MAKING DECISION TO CANCEL FRENCH DEAL IS NOT IN THEIR INTEREST, WHEREAS

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PROMPT CANCELLATION WILL FACILITATE CONTINUED PEACE-

FULL NUCLEAR COOPERATION WITH U.S. AND CANADA. AS WE REPORTED REF C, HIGH LEVELS OF GOC HAVE INFORMED US THAT ENTIRE CANDU SALE NOW UNDER REVIEW AND DELAY CAN ONLY HAVE SERIOUS NEGATIVE EFFECTS FOR KOREAN POSITION. ROKG MUST ALSO REALIZE THAT CONTINUED DELAY CAN ONLY HAVE FURTHER EROSIIVE EFFECTS ON POSSIBLE U.S. CONGRESSIONAL ACTION IF THIS ISSUE IS NOT RESOLVED PROMPTLY.

3. WE FRANKLY BELIEVE IT WOULD BE VERY DANGEROUS FOR KOREANS NOT REPEAT NOT TO TAKE CANADIAN VIEWS SERIOUSLY AND TO FAIL TO RESPOND FAVORABLY TO GOC BEFORE JAN 26. FROM OUR CONVERSATION WITH CANADIANS HERE, IT APPARENT THAT CANADIAN RETHINKING ON CANDU SALE IS BASED NOT ONLY ON REPROCESSING ISSUE BUT ALSO ON MORE GENERAL CONCERN OVER IMPACT ON CANADIAN OPINION OF ASSOCIATIONS WITH PARK GOVERNMENT BECAUSE OF ITS DOMESTIC POLICY.

4. ACCORDINGLY, YOU SHOULD CONTINUE TO POINT OUT TO NAM AND OTHERS AS APPROPRIATE THAT

CONTINUED ROK DELAY OF DECISION ON REPROCESSING ISSUE WILL JEOPORDIZE NOT ONLY CANDU PROJECT BUT COULD ALSO COMPLICATE OUR RELATIONS WITH CONGRESS ON FUTURE PEACEFUL NUCLEAR COOPERATION WITH THE ROK, EVEN WITH EVENTUAL DECISION TO CANCEL.

5. WE HAVE JUST LEARNED THAT FRENCH REPROCESSING SALE TO ROK AND U.S. NUCLEAR FUEL EXPORTS TO ROK ARE INCLUDED IN OUTLINE OF TOPICS TO BE CONSIDERED AT SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS HEARINGS ON NEW NUCLEAR EXPORT LEGISLATION WHICH BEGINS NEXT WEEK. ADMINISTRATION WITNESSES ARE SCHEDULED TO APPEAR JAN 29 AND 30. THIS IS STRONG INDICATION OF GROWING CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST IN KOREAN NUCLEAR QUESTIONS AND SHOULD BE BROUGHT TO ROKG ATTENTION. OBVIOUSLY, WE WOULD BE ABLE TO GREATLY DEFUSE CONGRESSIONAL CONCERN IF WE ARE ABLE TO STATE THAT ROKG HAS CANCELLED REPROCESSING CONTRACT. IF WE ARE UNABLE TO DO SO, WE ANTICIPATE CONGRESSIONAL EXAMINATION OF KOREAN NUCLEAR QUESTIONS WILL ONLY MAKE

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EVENTUAL APPROVAL KORI-II MORE DIFFICULT AND LEAD TO INCREASED CONGRESSIONAL PERCEPTIONS THAT ROK SEEKING NUCLEAR WEAPONS CAPABILITY.

6. APPRECIATE REF B SUGGESTION. HOWEVER, GROUP WILL NOT HAVE AUTHORITY TO MAKE COMMITMENTS AND WILL NOT REPEAT NOT BE ABLE TO GO SIGNIFICANTLY BEYOND OUR PREVIOUS STATEMENTS OF POSITIVE AS-

PECTS OF FUTURE PEACEFUL NUCLEAR COOPERATION. CONSEQUENTLY, WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE TO LEAD ROKG TO BELIEVE GROUP WOULD BE ABLE TO ENGAGE IN EXTENDED NEGOTIATIONS. THEREFORE WE CONTINUE BELIEVE IT BEST TO MAINTAIN PRESENT SCHEDULE FOR TALKS.

7. WE BELIEVE COURTESY CALL ON DPM NAM WOULD, AS YOU SUGGEST, BE USEFUL.

UNLESS SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED BY BLUE HOUSE WE PREFER NOT TO ENGAGE KIM CHANG-YOM DIRECTLY IN CALL WHICH WOULD INEVITABLY HAVE MAJOR POLITICAL OVERTONES.

8. ASSUME ROKG WILL PLAY VISIT IN VERY LOW KEY PUBLICLY. WE WOULD NOT WISH TO ENCOURAGE SPECULATION AS TO GROUP'S PURPOSE WHICH COULD ONLY PROVE EMBARRASSING TO ROKG AND COMPLICATE OUR PROBLEMS HERE. WHAT PRESS GUIDANCE DO YOU SUGGEST IF GROUPS VISIT IS SOURCE OF PUBLIC QUERY? IF QUERIED ON GROUP'S VISIT HERE WE WOULD INTEND TO SAY THAT VISIT IS FOR PURPOSE OF INFORMAL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS BETWEEN US AND ROK OFFICIALS ON ENERGY MATTERS OF MUTUAL CONCERN AND OFFER NO FURTHER COMMENT.

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