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STATE/C:JKELLY NSC:RMOLANDER  
STATE/IO:LNCVANAUGH  
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E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: EFIN ETRD MNUC TECH PARM KS JA TW CH  
SUBJECT: ROK REGIONAL NUCLEAR FUEL REPROCESSING PLANS  
REF: A) SEOUL 3374; B) SEOUL 2743; C) GENEVA 3781;  
D) TOKYO 6997; E) STATE 105611

1. WE AGREE THAT CONVERSATION WITH ROKG OFFICIALS ON KOREAN REPROCESSING PLANS REPORTED REFTEL A INVITES MORE OPEN DISCUSSIONS WITH ROKG ABOUT THIS PROBLEM. IN A PRECEDING CABLE WE HAVE SENT INSTRUCTIONS ON A LIMITED DEMARCHE TO THE ROKG ABOUT OUR INTERPRETATION OF THE PROVISIONS IN THE U.S.-ROK AGREEMENT FOR COOPERATION CONCERNING REPROCESSING OF FUELS FROM U.S. REACTORS. WE

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DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE NARROW LEGAL CONTEXT IS THE APPROPRIATE ONE IN WHICH TO RAISE BROADER QUESTIONS OF REPROCESSING IN GENERAL, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF ROK PARTICIPATION IN AN ASIAN REGIONAL REPROCESSING FACILITY. THIS MESSAGE OUTLINES THE BACKGROUND AND CONTENT OF SUCH A BROADER APPROACH WHICH WE HOPE TO MAKE SOON. HOWEVER, WE WISH FIRST TO GIVE CANADA AND FRANCE SOME ADVANCE IDEA OF HOW WE PLAN TO APPROACH ROKG ON THESE BROADER ISSUES, IN ORDER TO OBTAIN CANADIAN SUPPORT AND AVOID FRENCH MISINTERPRETATION OF OUR ACTIONS. AS SOON THEREAFTER AS POSSIBLE, WE PLAN TO ASK YOU TO APPROACH THE KOREANS DIRECTLY ALONG THE LINES OF PARAGRAPH 9 BELOW.

2. IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT THEIR OWN DOMESTIC REQUIREMENTS WOULD NOT PROVIDE AN ECONOMIC JUSTIFICATION FOR REPROCESSING FOR A VERY LONG TIME, THE KOREANS HAVE DEVELOPED A RATIONALE FOR THEIR DESIRE TO ACQUIRE A REPROCESSING CAPABILITY, AND MAY ARGUE THAT THEIR NPT STATUS ENTITLES THEM TO DEVELOP SUCH A CAPABILITY. HOWEVER, WE HESITATE TO CONCLUDE THAT ROK PLANS ARE BASED PRIMARILY ON A DESIRE TO GARNER AS LARGE A PIECE OF FUTURE NUCLEAR BUSINESS AS POSSIBLE. "WHATEVER THEIR PRIMARY MOTIVATION, KOREAN REPROCESSING ACTIVITY WILL IN FACT INCREASE THEIR NUCLEAR WEAPONS POTENTIAL AND IT WILL INEVITABLY RAISE THE MOST SERIOUS QUESTIONS ABOUT THEIR NUCLEAR INTENTIONS, DESPITE KOREAN RATIFICATION OF THE NPT. GIVEN THE EXTREME SENSITIVITY OF THE ISSUES INVOLVED, WE MUST GIVE HEAVY WEIGHT TO THESE OTHER CONSIDERATIONS, WHILE RECOGNIZING THE OBJECTIVE OF

PROMOTING KOREAN ECONOMIC GROWTH. THE BASIC ISSUE WE FACE CONCERNS WHETHER THE ROK WILL PROVIDE ADEQUATE ASSURANCE THAT IT INTENDS IN FACT TO OBSERVE THE NPT.

3. WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT, THIS ISSUE IS GOING TO BE FORCED BY A NUMBER OF COMING EVENTS. FOR EXAMPLE, CONGRESSIONAL OPPOSITION HAS ALREADY DEVELOPED ON THE RECENTLY RESUBMITTED PROPOSAL FOR AN EXIMBANK LOAN FOR A SECOND U.S. POWER REACTOR IN KOREA. CONGRESSMAN REES AND SENATOR STEVENSON HAVE BEEN PERSUADED TO POSTPONE HEARINGS ON THE LOAN PROPOSAL, BUT THEY REMAIN KEENLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE ISSUE. IN ADDITION, THE DECISION  
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PENDING ON EXPORT LICENSE APPROVAL OF THE INITIAL SHIPMENT OF U.S. FUEL FOR THE KORI I REACTOR HAS RAISED HERE AND ON THE HILL (CONGRESSMAN ASPIN) THE ISSUE OF WHAT CONTROL WE HAVE OVER KOREAN REPROCESSING OF U.S. FUEL UNDER THE TERMS OF OUR AGREEMENT FOR COOPERATION. (WE HAVE GIVEN YOU OUR VIEWS ON THIS ISSUE IN A SEPARATE MESSAGE.) SENATOR RIBICOFF HAS NOW PUBLICLY ATTACKED THE FRENCH SALE OF A REPROCESSING PLANT TO ROK.

4. WE NOTE THAT THE KOREAN CONTENTION REPORTED IN REFTEL A THAT THE PLUTONIUM TO BE PRODUCED WOULD NOT BE "WEAPONS GRADE" IS BASED ON A TECHNICAL DISTINCTION THAT IS INAPPLICABLE TO THE KIND OF NUCLEAR FORCE THE ROK MIGHT ACQUIRE. NORMAL REACTOR GRADE PLUTONIUM COULD BE USED IN SOPHISTICATED BOMB DESIGNS OR, AT THE COST OF SOME UNCERTAINTY IN YIELD, EVEN IN LESS SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS. (MOREOVER, POWER REACTORS, AND PARTICULARLY THE CANDU REACTOR, COULD IN FACT BE OPERATED TO PRODUCE PLUTONIUM THAT IS OPTIMAL FOR WEAPONS USE, ALTHOUGH AT SOME ECONOMIC COST.) GIVEN OUR UNEASINESS ABOUT KOREAN NUCLEAR INTENTIONS, WE WOULD BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE IMMEDIATE PHYSICAL ACCESS TO WEAPON MATERIAL THAT A REPROCESSING PLANT WOULD GIVE THE ROK.

5. IN THE CONTEXT OF OUR EFFORTS TO CONVENE A MEETING OF MAJOR NUCLEAR SUPPLIERS, FRANCE HAS ARGUED STRONGLY THAT THE ISSUE OF EXPORTS TO SENSITIVE AREAS SHOULD BE TREATED ON A BILATERAL BASIS BETWEEN SUPPLIERS AND NOT IN A MULTILATERAL FORUM. TO DATE WE HAVE DISCUSSED OUR CONCERNS ABOUT THE GENERAL ISSUE OF REPROCESSING IN SOME DETAIL WITH THE FRENCH, BUT HAVE RAISED OUR SPECIFIC CONCERNS ABOUT KOREA ONLY RECENTLY AND IN RATHER GENERAL TERMS. WE HAVE INFORMED FRANCE THAT PRIOR TO THE CONVENING OF THE MULTILATERAL MEETING IN LONDON ON JUNE 18 WE WISH TO HOLD BILATERAL TALKS WITH THEM (ON JUNE 17) TO DISCUSS THE KOREAN CASE, ALONG WITH A NUMBER OF OTHER BILATERAL ISSUES THAT WE OR THE FRENCH HAVE RAISED. WE WILL PRESENT OUR CONCERNS ABOUT KOREAN REPROCESSING AT THAT TIME IN SOME DETAIL. WHILE THE FRENCH MAY WELL PROVE UNWILLING TO WITHDRAW FROM THEIR PILOT PLANT DEAL, OUR

PRESENTATION WILL ALSO BE DESIGNED TO ENCOURAGE THE  
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TIGHTEST POSSIBLE SAFEGUARDS AND PHYSICAL SECURITY ON THE PLANT AND ON THE TECHNOLOGY, TO URGE A SIGNIFICANT LEVEL OF SUPPLIER INVOLVEMENT IN THE PLANT OPERATION, AND TO DISCOURAGE FRENCH SALE OF A LARGER-SCALE COMMERCIAL FACILITY TO KOREA. MOST IMPORTANT, WE WILL DISCUSS OUR SPECIAL INTERESTS AND SPECIAL CONCERNS IN THE KOREAN CASE IN ORDER TO INSURE FRENCH UNDERSTANDING THAT WE ARE NOT SEEKING COMMERCIAL ADVANTAGE IN EXPRESSING TO THE ROKG OUR DISAPPROVAL OF THE REPROCESSING PLANT TRANSACTION. IN THE EVENT THAT FRANCE BASES ITS RESPONSE ON EXISTING CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS TO PROVIDE THE PILOT PLANT, WE WOULD SEEK THEIR CONSENT TO KOREA'S WITHDRAWING FROM THE CONTRACT, AND WE COULD APPROACH THE KOREANS SIMILARLY. IN THIS CONNECTION, WE WOULD APPRECIATE INFORMATION (IF AVAILABLE) OF ANY FINANCIAL OR OTHER PENALTIES WHICH CANCELLATION MIGHT INCUR.

6. WE HAVE TAKEN A VERY CAUTIOUS APPROACH TO REPROCESSING EVEN IN CASES THAT ARE LESS SENSITIVE THAN THIS ONE AND WHERE WE HAVE LESS AT STAKE. IN OUR PROPOSALS TO OTHER MAJOR NUCLEAR SUPPLIERS WE ARE SEEKING TO OBTAIN AGREEMENT THAT REPROCESSING ASSISTANCE SHOULD BE VIEWED AS SPECIALLY SENSITIVE, AND THAT IF SUCH ASSISTANCE IS PROVIDED THE FACILITY INVOLVED SHOULD BE MULTINATIONAL, WITH FULL PARTICIPATION BY THE SUPPLIER IN MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS AND POSSIBLY WITH INVOLVEMENT OF OTHER REGIONAL PARTICIPANTS. A REGIONAL PLANT WHICH PROVIDES SERVICES NEED NOT BE MULTINATIONAL, IN WHICH CASE IT WOULD NOT AFFORD THE ADDITIONAL INHIBITIONS AGAINST ABROGATION AND DIVERSION WHICH WE HAVE SOUGHT, AND WOULD BE MERELY A LARGER NATIONAL PLANT WITH CORRESPONDINGLY LARGER RISKS.

7. IN ADDITION, IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT ANY PLANS FOR REGIONAL REPROCESSING BE DEVELOPED WITH CARE AND WITH ATTENTION TO THE INTERESTS OF OTHER PARTIES. FOR EXAMPLE REFTTEL C REPORTS A LEADING SPOKESMAN FOR JAPANESE NUCLEAR INDUSTRY (R. IMAI) AS FLATLY RULING OUT KOREA AS "TOO RISKY" A LOCATION FOR A REGIONAL REPROCESSING FACILITY. AS ANOTHER EXAMPLE, IN MARCH 30 CONVERSATION WITH DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS A REPRESENTATIVE OF NUCLEAR UTILITIES SERVICES PROPOSED A FEASIBILITY STUDY (WITH POSSIBLE  
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PARTICIPATION OF ROK AND ROC IN ADDITION TO JAPAN) OF A REGIONAL REPROCESSING PLANT THAT COULD BE LOCATED ON U.S. TERRITORY IN THE PALAU ISLANDS. REFTTEL D REPORTS ON JAPANESE INTEREST IN THE POSSIBILITY OF A MULTINATIONAL REPROCESSING FACILITY IN THE PHILIPPINES. SEPTTEL WILL REPORT ON DEPARTMENT DISCUSSIONS WITH ROC AEC ON POSSIBLE

FEASIBILITY STUDY OF REGIONAL MULTINATIONAL PLANT;  
DEPARTMENT EXPRESSED USG OPPOSITION TO ANY IN-COUNTRY  
REPROCESSING ON TAIWAN.

8. WE OURSELVES HAVE SOME QUESTION WHETHER LOCATING SUCH  
A PLANT IN SOUTH KOREA WOULD INDEED BE DESIRABLE OR  
FEASIBLE, AND CERTAINLY DO NOT WANT TO BE COMMITTED  
PREMATURELY TO THE ROK AS A LOCATION. FINALLY, EVEN A  
MULTINATIONAL PLANT LOCATED OUTSIDE OF KOREA WOULD RAISE  
QUESTIONS ABOUT PLUTONIUM STORAGE IN ROK, UNLESS THE  
RESULTING PLUTONIUM WERE FABRICATED IN A FORM THAT  
PRECLUDED EASY ACCESS TO WEAPON MATERIAL.

9. IN THIS OVERALL CONTEXT WE PLAN TO AUTHORIZE YOU TO  
APPROACH THE KOREANS, AFTER WE HAVE HAD TALKS WITH FRANCE  
AND CANADA, ON THE FOLLOWING LINES:

-- THE U.S. HAS BEEN GIVING SERIOUS ATTENTION TO KOREA'S  
ASPIRATION TO ACQUIRE ITS OWN REPROCESSING CAPABILITY,  
STARTING WITH A PILOT FACILITY THAT MIGHT EVOLVE INTO A  
LARGER-SCALE REGIONAL CAPABILITY. ALTHOUGH RECOGNIZING  
THAT AT SOME FUTURE TIME THE NATIONS IN THE AREA MIGHT  
FIND IT IN THEIR INTEREST TO DEVELOP A COMMERCIAL-SCALE  
REPROCESSING CAPABILITY, WE HAVE SERIOUS CONCERNS ABOUT  
KOREA'S MOVING IN THIS DIRECTION AT PRESENT. IN  
PARTICULAR, ALTHOUGH KOREA HAS RATIFIED THE NPT, KOREAN  
DETERMINATION TO PROCEED, EVEN WITH A PILOT FACILITY,  
COULD BE DESTABILIZING AND COULD IMPAIR U.S.-KOREAN  
NUCLEAR RELATIONSHIPS. THERE ARE WIDESPREAD CONCERNS  
IN THIS REGARD WITHIN THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH AS WELL AS IN  
THE CONGRESS, THAT ARE VERY LIKELY TO AFFECT THE ABILITY  
OF THE U.S. TO MOVE PRIMPTLY ON KOREA'S PENDING NUCLEAR  
REQUESTS SHOULD KOREA CONTINUE IN ITS DESIRE TO ACQUIRE

AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL REPROCESSING CAPABILITY, STARTING

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WITH A PILOT FACILITY.

-- IT IS TO BE NOTED IN THIS REGARD THAT THE ISSUE OF AN  
EXPORT-IMPORT BANK LOAN FOR THE ROK IS BEFORE CONGRESS.  
THIS LOAN MAY WELL BE DISAPPROVED UNLESS THE CONCERNS  
WITHIN THE ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESS REGARDING REPROCES-  
SING ARE SATISFIED.

-- ON THE OTHER HAND, WE RECOGNIZE THAT THE NATIONS IN  
THE AREA, INCLUDING THE ROK, MAY IN TIME HAVE LEGITIMATE  
COMMERCIAL REASONS FOR WISHING TO ACQUIRE THEIR OWN  
REGIONAL EAST ASIAN REPROCESSING FACILITY. THE USG IS  
PREPARED TO COOPERATE WITH THE NATIONS IN THE REGION  
IN EXAMINING THIS POSSIBILITY. WE BELIEVE IT IS  
SIGNIFICANT THAT THE NPT REVIEW CONFERENCE RECENTLY  
ENDORSED THE CONCEPT THAT FUTURE REPROCESSING FACILITIES  
BE ESTABLISHED ON SUCH A MULTINATIONAL REGIONAL BASIS

TO EASE PROLIFERATION CONCERNS. WE LOOK FAVORABLY ON MULTINATIONAL PLANTS AS A WAY OF MEETING ASIA'S REPROCESSING NEEDS ECONOMICALLY AND SAFELY, AND WOULD BE WILLING TO DISCUSS THIS SUBJECT WITH THE ROK AND ALSO THE JAPANESE, AS SUGGESTED BY THE ROK IN REFTEL B. HOWEVER, SUCH DISCUSSIONS WILL HAVE TO BE FREE TO CONSIDER A NUMBER OF ALTERNATIVE SITES AS WELL AS DIFFERENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR OWNERSHIP AND OPERATION. AT THIS JUNCTURE WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE PRUDENT TO PLAN HAVING SUCH A FACILITY LOCATED OUTSIDE THE ROK, BUT WITH FULL ROK PARTICIPATION.

-- WHILE THERE COULD BE SUBSTANTIAL PLACE FOR ROK PARTICIPATION IN A MULTINATIONAL REGIONAL REPROCESSING FACILITY FOR ASIA, WE QUESTION THE WISDOM OF THE ROK PROCEEDING WITH ITS PROPOSED PILOT PLANT OR CONDUCTING DETAILED PLANNING FOR LARGER PLANTS IN THE ABSENCE OF CLOSE CONSULTATION WITH OTHER CONCERNED COUNTRIES -- ESPECIALLY JAPAN -- ON QUESTIONS OF DEMAND, TIMING, TECHNICAL CAPABILITIES, ECONOMICS, AND PARTICULARLY, POTENTIAL LOCATION.

-- ALSO, WE BELIEVE IT MUST BE STRESSED THAT THE CONSTRUCTION OF A REPROCESSING PLANT (AS WE TOLD THE ROK IN SECRET

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REFTEL E) IS AN EXPENSIVE, RISKY AND COMPLICATED VENTURE AND THERE HAVE BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL LARGE-SCALE VENTURES BY VERY COMPETENT INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS G.E. FEW COUNTRIES HAVE ENGAGED IN LARGE-SCALE REPROCESSING IN THE PAST, AND THOSE FEW HAVE ALL EXPERIENCED CONSIDERABLE DIFFICULTY. WE BELIEVE IT IMPORTANT TO TAKE A CAREFUL AND DELIBERATE APPROACH IN PLANNING SUCH A COSTLY VENTURE AS A LARGE MULTINATIONAL REPROCESSING FACILITY. HOWEVER, AS A COMMON PERCEPTION OF PLANS DEVELOPS IN THE REGION, THE U.S. WOULD BE PREPARED TO CONSIDER VARIOUS WAYS IN WHICH IT MIGHT ASSIST A MULTINATIONAL REGIONAL VENTURE AND BECOME A PARTICIPANT IN IT, EITHER DIRECTLY OR THROUGH THE PARTICIPATION OF U.S. INDUSTRY.

10. THE PURPOSE OF THIS SUGGESTED APPROACH WOULD BE TO IMPRESS ON THE ROKG THE POTENTIALLY SERIOUS REPERCUSSIONS OF ITS PRESENT REPROCESSING PLANS. IF THE KOREANS ARE NOT SUFFICIENTLY RESPONSIVE TO THIS GENERAL EXPRESSION OF CONCERN, WE WOULD BE PREPARED, AT A MINIMUM TO FOLLOW IT WITH A FIRM STATEMENT OF OUR UNWILLINGNESS TO ALLOW SPENT FUEL FROM U.S.-SUPPLIED REACTORS TO BE REPROCESSED IN-COUNTRY AND WOULD SEEK TO GET CANADA TO ADOPT A SIMILAR ATTITUDE. WE WOULD ALSO HOPE TO COOL SOME OF THE KOREAN ENTHUSIASM FOR THEIR REGIONAL REPROCESSING RATIONALE BY EMPHASIZING THE NECESSITY OF DISCUSSING THEIR PLANS WITH THE JAPANESE AND OTHERS. FINALLY, WE WOULD HOLD OPEN THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE U.S. MIGHT LEND ITS SUPPORT TO KOREAN PARTICIPATION IN A MULTINATIONAL

OPERATION, BUT PROBABLY ONE NOT, REPEAT NOT, LOCATED  
IN THE ROK. KISSINGER

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