

July 31, 1970

**Letter, UNCURK Principal Secretary Kuzbari to UN
Chef de Cabinet Narasimhan**

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Summary:

The Park administration continues to urge that a modernization of ROK defense forces needs to take place before US troop withdrawal. In a crisis of confidence, the ROK government fears US abandonment vis-a-vis North Korea.

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NATIONS UNIES

UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION FOR THE UNIFICATION AND REHABILITATION OF KOREA
(UNCURK)CONFIDENTIAL

Seoul, 31 July 1970

Dear Mr. Narasimhan,

A great debate is presently taking place in the Republic of Korea with regard to the U.S. Government's announced decision to withdraw some of its troops from this country. The debate appears to center around the fear and anxiety of the ROK Government that such a step could weaken the present position of President Park Chung Hee and his administration. The U.S. Government's move has also led to what is being described as a crisis of confidence between the two allies. Since President Nixon announced his Guam Doctrine on 26 July 1969 to have Asian countries assume greater defence responsibilities, the ROK Government has been put on notice of the former's intention to cut some of its troops stationed in the Republic of Korea. Nevertheless, President Park Chung Hee and his administration continued to take the U.S. intention lightly and hoped for a diversion of its decision. Consequently, when the U.S. Government has reaffirmed once more its decision to pull out one division of its troops from South Korea, the Korean side opposed that decision vehemently and pointed out that the measure may encourage North Korea to cast doubt about the U.S. Government's willingness to defend the ROK. However, political observers in Seoul believe that President Park may have missed a great opportunity to appear in the eyes of his countrymen as a great leader. Had he faced them with the realities of the new situation and appealed to them to stand independently on their own feet, he could have perhaps emerged in a stronger position. But, instead, his administration continued to give the general impression, obviously for domestic reasons, that no U.S. withdrawal will be effected before a complete modernization of the ROK armed forces first.

At the Honolulu conference of the U.S./ROK defence ministers, when the South Korean side insisted that the U.S. should first embark on a programme to modernize the ROK forces and then to gradually pull out part of its troops later, it was told bluntly that the question of troops withdrawal is not negotiable at all.

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Mr. C.V. Narasimhan
Chef de Cabinet
United Nations
New York

- 2 -

Worried about these developments, the South Korean Government then proposed that the U.S. should give a strong assurance that the latter would automatically come to its aid under the U.S./ROK Mutual Defence Treaty should South Korea be attacked. Under the famous Brown Memorandum, the U.S. has only promised to consult the South Korean Government, and not to come automatically to its aid in case of war.

There also exists some difference of views between the ROK and the U.S. sides regarding their assessment of North Korea's intentions. While the South Korean side has repeatedly stated that 1971 is a crucial year because of the numerous statements by Premier Kim Il Sung to unify the country by force, the U.S. side did not share this view and pointed out that North Korea alone is not in a position to attack the south.

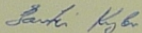
What appears to be concrete at the moment is that the current U.S./ROK talks for the modernization of the ROK forces are not related to the already made U.S. decision to cut back in the level of its troops in South Korea. The ROK side has given the U.S. a long list of request for modern military equipments running into billions of dollars, but the U.S. side doubts the capability of the ROK military forces to absorb these equipments.

While all these developments in terms of the U.S./ROK relations have been taking place, the reaction of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has been equally interesting. In a statement made by the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on the 17th anniversary of the Korean War, accusations were made against the U.S. for sending new war equipment to the South Korean Army. The North Korean side has warned that the balance of forces in the Korean peninsula as well as in the World has completely changed and that North Korea has become stronger politically, economically and militarily.

What is mostly feared by the present ROK Government is that an "abandonment" of South Korea by the U.S. may lead the majority of the people in South Korea to think that ultimately they are left alone to settle their problem with the North.

With warmest personal regards,

Yours sincerely,



Zouheir Kuzbari
Principal Secretary