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CONFIDENTIAL PTQ3441

PAGE 01 SEOUL 02078 01 OF 03 130206Z
ACTION EAP-01

INFO LOG-00 ACDA-08 ACDE-00 AID-00 ACQ-01 CA-02 CIAE-00
SMEC-00 C-00 DOEE-00 SRPP-00 DS-00 EUR-01 FBIE-00
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L-01 ADS-00 M-00 NSAE-00 OCS-03 OES-01 OIC-02
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O 130203Z APR 98
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9735
INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY BEIJING
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
SECDEF WASHDC
NSC WASHDC
COMUSKOREA SEOUL KOR//J-5/SA//
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI//J-5/FPA//

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 SEOUL 002078

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/08/08
TAGS: PREL, KS, KN
SUBJECT: U/S PICKERING'S MEETING WITH VICE FOREIGN
MINISTER SUN JOUN-YUNG

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 SEOUL 02078 01 OF 03 130206Z
CLASSIFIED BY DCM RICHARD A. CHRISTENSON. REASON: 1.5
(B, D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: IN AN APRIL 8 MEETING, U/S PICKERING AND
ROK VICE FOREIGN MINISTER SUN JOUN-YUNG DISCUSSED KEDO,
NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE, THE REGIONAL FINANCIAL CRISIS AND
PRESIDENT KIM DAE-JUNG'S UPCOMING STATE VISIT TO

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Paul Blackburn, Senior Reviewer

WASHINGTON. ALSO ACCOMPANYING U/S PICKERING IN THE MEETING WERE AMBASSADOR BOSWORTH, P SPECIAL ASSISTANT SHEAR AND POLOFF (NOTETAKER). NEW DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER CHOI SUNG-HONG, SPECIAL ASSISTANT AN CHONG-KI, NORTH AMERICAN BUREAU DIRECTOR GENERAL YU MYUNG-HWAN AND HIS SUCCESSOR AS OF APRIL 8, KWON JONG-RAK, ALSO ATTENDED ON THE ROK SIDE. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) WELCOMING HIS GUEST, VICE FOREIGN MINISTER SUN EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE USG'S EFFORTS TO ARRANGE PRESIDENT KIM DAE-JUNG'S STATE VISIT IN JUNE, OBSERVING THAT THE TRIP SHOULD STRENGTHEN TRADITIONAL TIES BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. U/S PICKERING NOTED THAT THERE WAS TREMENDOUS INTEREST IN WASHINGTON IN THE NEW ROK ADMINISTRATION. NOT ONLY WERE THE PRESIDENT AND MRS. CLINTON LOOKING FORWARD TO MEETING PRESIDENT KIM AND HIS WIFE, BUT SECRETARY ALBRIGHT WAS EQUALLY INTERESTED IN COMING TO SEOUL VERY SOON TO MEET FOREIGN MINISTER PARK.

FOCUS OF UPCOMING VISITS

3. (C) PRESIDENT KIM DAE-JUNG'S TRIP WOULD BE AN IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY TO SET OUT THE GOALS AND ACTIVITIES
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 SEOUL 02078 01 OF 03 130206Z
OF THE ROK-U.S. AGENDA, U/S PICKERING SAID. THE NEW PRESIDENT HAD ALREADY DONE SOME REMARKABLE THINKING ABOUT LONG-TERM GOALS IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION, THE SAME KIND OF LONG-TERM THINKING THAT ALSO FASCINATED PRESIDENT CLINTON. KIM DAE-JUNG'S IDEAS ON THE EVOLUTION OF NORTHEAST ASIAN SECURITY TIES MIGHT BE ONE AREA ON WHICH BOTH SIDES MIGHT FOCUS AS WE PLAN THE STATE VISIT. VICE MINISTER SUN RESPONDED THAT PRESIDENT KIM HIGHLY VALUES HIS TRIP, NOT JUST BECAUSE IT WILL BE THE FIRST STATE VISIT SINCE HIS ELECTION, BUT ALSO BECAUSE IT IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THE LONG-TERM SECURITY AND ECONOMIC ORDER IN THE REGION. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY WOULD PREPARE PRESIDENT KIM FOR THIS KIND OF DISCUSSION, AS WELL AS THE TOPIC OF UNIVERSAL VALUES FOR THE WORLD.

4. (C) THE VICE FOREIGN MINISTER LATER NOTED THAT FOREIGN MINISTER PARK HAD FORMALLY ACCEPTED SECRETARY ALBRIGHT'S PROPOSAL TO VISIT KOREA IN EARLY MAY. RESPONDING TO U/S PICKERING'S QUERY ABOUT WHAT ISSUES THE FOREIGN MINISTER MIGHT LIKE TO DISCUSS, THE VICE MINISTER LISTED THE UPCOMING STATE VISIT, FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND COOPERATION, AND KEDO AS MAJOR TOPICS OF CONVERSATION.

WHEN U/S PICKERING REMARKED THAT HE HAD TOLD THE SECRETARY THAT HE WOULD RESOLVE KEDO EVEN BEFORE HER TRIP TO SEOUL, THE VICE MINISTER LAUGHED AND SAID, "SORRY, WE CAN'T DO IT, YOU'RE ONLY HERE ONE NIGHT."

LEADERSHIP IN TIME OF CRISIS

5. (C) THE U.S. LEADERSHIP IN WASHINGTON FOLLOWED EVENTS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 SEOUL 02078 01 OF 03 130206Z
IN KOREA CLOSELY AND WITH CARE, U/S PICKERING SAID; KOREA WAS A DAILY TOPIC ON THE AGENDAS OF THE SECRETARY, DEPUTY SECRETARY AND THE UNDER SECRETARY HIMSELF. NONETHELESS, UPPERMOST IN OUR FOCUS WOULD BE THE FINANCIAL CRISIS IN KOREA AND THE REGION, THE UNDER SECRETARY REMARKED, NOTING THAT THE USG WAS ABSOLUTELY DELIGHTED AT THE LEADERSHIP DISPLAYED BY KIM DAE-JUNG AND THE KOREAN GOVERNMENT DURING THIS FINANCIAL CRISIS. THE NEW ADMINISTRATION HAD ADDRESSED WITH FORCEFULNESS AND STRENGTH THE STEPS NECESSARY TO GET KOREA OUT OF ITS FINANCIAL CRISIS. IF THERE WAS ANY WORRY, IT WAS THAT RECENT SUCCESS WOULD LEAD KOREANS TO THINK PREMATURELY THAT THE CRISIS WAS OVER. THE ROK SHOULD GUARD AGAINST OVERCONFIDENCE, BECAUSE THE FINANCIAL PROBLEMS OF THE REGION WERE ALL INTERRELATED. INDONESIA WAS IN A PERILOUS SITUATION, AND JAPAN HAD AREAS OF FRAGILITY, DESPITE UNDERLYING STRENGTHS. RECENT STOCK MARKET AND CURRENCY CHANGES IN JAPAN REFLECTED UNCERTAINTY ABOUT JAPAN. THE PROBLEM WAS, IF JAPAN SNEEZED, BOTH THE U.S. AND KOREA COULD GET A COLD.

6. (C) THE VICE MINISTER EXPRESSED DEEP APPRECIATION FOR THE USG'S CONSTRUCTIVE AND POSITIVE ROLE IN HELPING TO HEAD OFF THE FINANCIAL CRISIS AND DEVELOP THE IMF

CONFIDENTIAL

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CONFIDENTIAL PTQ3442

PAGE 01 SEOUL 02078 02 OF 03 130206Z
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CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 SEOUL 02078 02 OF 03 130206Z
PACKAGE. THE KOREAN GOVERNMENT WAS FULLY COMMITTED TO
CARRYING OUT THE IMF-MANDATED PROCEDURES AND LIVING UP TO
ALL THE CONDITIONS, DESPITE THE FACT THAT THIS CAUSED
PAIN IN SOME AREAS. HE THEN WENT ON TO REQUEST USG

ASSISTANCE WITH THE IMF DISBURSEMENTS THAT FORM THE SECOND LINE OF DEFENSE. THE ROKG UNDERSTOOD THAT VERY STRICT REQUIREMENTS WERE ATTACHED TO THESE FUNDS, BUT IT WAS "MOST IMPORTANT" FOR THE USG TO GIVE THE GREEN LIGHT TO DISBURSE THEM, SINCE IT ALSO AFFECTED CONTRIBUTIONS OF OTHER NATIONS. HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE USG WOULD HAVE THE "POLITICAL WILL" TO ALLOW THIS TO HAPPEN.

MOVING BEYOND FERTILIZER IN BEIJING

7. (C) ANOTHER ISSUE OF GREAT INTEREST WAS THE EMERGING NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE, WHICH THE USG FULLY SUPPORTS, U/S PICKERING SAID. IT IS IMPORTANT TO FIND ALL CONCEIVABLE WAYS TO ACHIEVE DIALOGUE WITH THE NORTH, TO BRING IT INTO THE WORLD COMMUNITY AND FIND A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA.

8. (C) SEOUL AND PYONGYANG HAD AGREED TO HOLD THREE DAYS OF OFFICIAL TALKS AT THE VICE MINISTER LEVEL IN BEIJING ON SATURDAY, APRIL 11, VICE MINISTER SUN CONFIRMED. THE SOUTH WOULD BE REPRESENTED BY THE VICE MINISTER OF UNIFICATION; THE NORTH'S REPRESENTATIVE WAS STILL NOT KNOWN. WHILE THE PROVISION OF FERTILIZER WOULD BE ONE TOPIC IN BEIJING, THE ROKG WANTED TO MOVE BEYOND THIS, AND EVEN THE NORTH HAD PROPOSED DISCUSSING "OTHER ITEMS OF MUTUAL CONCERN." THE ROK WANTED TO TALK ABOUT AN
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PAGE 03 SEOUL 02078 02 OF 03 130206Z
EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ENVOYS AND ABOUT WAYS TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE OF SEPARATED FAMILIES. SUN PROFESSED HIMSELF "QUITE HOPEFUL" ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR THE TALKS, SAYING THAT THE NORTH KOREAN LEADERSHIP HAD A "POSITIVE ATTITUDE" ABOUT THE ROK PROPOSAL FOR SPECIAL ENVOYS. PYONGYANG HAD FOUND KIM DAE-JUNG'S PLEDGE TO SEPARATE POLITICS AND ECONOMICS "ATTRACTIVE."

DELICATE BALANCE IN DIALOGUE WITH DPRK

9. (C) THE VICE MINISTER ASSURED U/S PICKERING THAT KOREA WOULD CONTINUE TO CONSULT CLOSELY WITH THE U.S. ON THE BILATERAL DIALOGUE, BECAUSE THE ROKG APPRECIATED THE USG'S "CONSTRUCTIVE AND POSITIVE" ROLE. THE KOREAN GOVERNMENT ALSO SAW A "DELICATE BALANCE" BETWEEN THE FOUR PARTY TALKS AND THE BILATERAL NORTH-SOUTH DIALOGUE AND WOULD CONTINUE TO REINFORCE THE GENEVA PROCESS. IN THE ROK'S ASSESSMENT, THE RECENT PLENARY IN GENEVA HAD BEEN

"POSITIVE," A SUCCESS IN THE SENSE IT HAD CONTINUED TO KEEP THE DPRK ON BOARD. SOUTH KOREA WOULD ALSO SEEK TO EXPLOIT ANY OTHER CHANNEL, LIKE GENERAL OFFICER TALKS, WHICH WAS AVAILABLE.

10. (C) IT WAS HARD TO BE OPTIMISTIC AT THE END OF THE GENEVA PLENARY, U/S PICKERING SAID, NOTING THAT THERE HAD BEEN LOW EXPECTATIONS GOING INTO THE MEETINGS. THE NORTH HAD USED ITS TYPICAL METHODS, BEING OBSTREPEROUS, APPLYING PRESSURE, AND THEN RELENTING IN THE END. NONETHELESS, THE GENEVA SESSION HAD PRESERVED THE INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIP AND KEPT AN OPEN DOOR FOR
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 SEOUL 02078 02 OF 03 130206Z
DISCUSSION; WE WOULD HAVE TO WORK ON NEXT STEPS. THE USG WAS OF COURSE VERY INTERESTED IN THE OUTCOME OF THE BEIJING TALKS.

[REDACTED] THE USG WOULD WANT TO CONSULT ON HOW THE ROKG WILL BROADEN THE TALKS, AND HOW WE SHOULD CONTINUE THE FOUR PARTY PROCESS; THERE COULD BE A VERY VALUABLE TACTICAL BY-PLAY THAT GIVES US USEFUL LEVERAGE WITH THE NORTH. THE PROPOSED GENERAL OFFICER TALKS COULD BE A THIRD ARENA FOR CONTACT AND COULD AVOID SERIOUS MISCALCULATION AND CONFUSION ARISING OUT OF MILITARY MISSTEPS.

DEEP CONCERN ABOUT KEDO

11. (C) THE USG WAS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT KEDO, THE LIGHT WATER REACTOR PROJECT (LWR) AND HEAVY FUEL OIL (HFO). THE UNDER SECRETARY EMPHASIZED.

[REDACTED] WHILE THE NORTH'S RECENT COMPLAINTS ABOUT LACK OF PROGRESS ON THE LWR AND HFO REFLECTED

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1.4(D)

CONFIDENTIAL

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CONFIDENTIAL PTQ3443

PAGE 01 SEOUL 02078 03 OF 03 130206Z
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CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 SEOUL 02078 03 OF 03 130206Z
PARANOIA, THEY WERE ALSO DELETERIOUS TO OUR INTERESTS, IF

NOT THREATENING. IF PYONGYANG SENSES WE WILL BETRAY OUR COMMITMENTS TO THEM, THEY WILL LOOK FOR A REASON TO BETRAY THEIR COMMITMENTS TO US. THIS ISSUE COULD ALSO AFFECT THE BILATERAL ROK-DPRK DIALOGUE.

12. (C) THE VICE FOREIGN MINISTER AGREED THAT KEDO WAS NOT AN EASY TASK. AT THE MARCH 19 KEDO EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, THE ISSUES WERE SO DIFFICULT THAT COMMON SOLUTIONS HAD ELUDED US. U/S PICKERING PROPOSED THAT THE ROK AND USG PROVIDE SOME CLEAR LEADERSHIP ON THE ISSUE, [REDACTED] IT WAS IMPERATIVE TO FIND ANSWERS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE; WE COULD NOT ALLOW SOMETHING THAT TOOK SO LONG TO PUT TOGETHER TO GET OFF TRACK NOW.

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13. (U) UNDERSECRETARY PICKERING APPROVED THIS CABLE AFTER HIS DEPARTURE.

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