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SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY

JUN 21 1957

To: The Under Secretary *HK*
Via: S/S
From: R - Hugh S. Cumming, Jr.

Subject: Intelligence Note: Initial Reaction to Weapons Modernization in South Korea

The June 21 announcement that the US would no longer consider itself bound by the provisions of the Korean Armistice agreement banning importation of new weapons apparently caught Communist representatives in the Military Armistice Commission off balance. After reserving the right to reply to the US statement at a later date, the Communists reiterated such time-worn cliches as: UN forces were "attempting to make South Korea an atomic base and prepare for a new war;" the Communists were "vehemently opposed to equipping UN forces with new types of weapons, wrecking the armistice agreement;" and US allegations of Communist truce violations were made only to cover up Allied violations.

As of 3 p.m. June 21 (Washington time), Communist propaganda media had not yet commented on the US announcement. On June 20, however, North Korean commentaries on US plans to transfer the United Nations Command Headquarters from Tokyo to Seoul attempted to relate this move to recent US official indications that it was considering modernizing its forces in South Korea and supplying them with atomic weapons and guided missiles. An editorial in the North Korean party newspaper Nodong Sinmun, and a broadcast by the Communist Korean Central News Agency, alleged further that the command shift was for the purpose of putting the Republic of Korea (ROK) Government under direct US control and for "converting South Korea into a guided missile base." The editorial claimed that the shift revealed that the "Syngman Rhee regime could not exist without the protection of American bayonets."

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Communist reaction to the statement can be expected to develop rapidly, probably along the lines already laid down in the Nodong Sinmun editorial and previous similar statements.

As expected, the ROK hailed the US decision as "long overdue" and hoped it would be only a "first step which would lead to the abrogation of the agreement itself."

A similar memorandum has been addressed to the Secretary.

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