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239. Memorandum of Discussion at the 334th Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, August 8, 1957¹

Washington, August 8, 1957

[Here follow a paragraph listing the participants at the meeting and agenda items 1–6.]

7. U.S. Policy Toward Korea (NSC 5702; NSC 5702/1; NSC Action No. 1731;²Memo for NSC from Executive Secretary, subject: “Interim Report on Korea”, dated July 30, 1957;³Memos for NSC from Acting Executive Secretary, subject: “U.S. Policy Toward Korea”, dated August 5⁴ and 7,⁵ 1957)

Mr. Cutler briefed the Council at considerable length as Secretary Dulles came into the Cabinet Room and replaced [Page 481] Mr. Reinhardt at the table. Mr. Cutler read in detail paragraphs 9–a, –b and –c in the revised form proposed by the NSC Planning Board, as follows:

“9. a. Continue through the period FY 1958 to deploy in Korea two U.S. infantry divisions and one fighter–bomber wing with necessary support forces.

“b. Replace existing equipment of U.S. forces in Korea, including planes, with improved models of such equipment as and when required for military reasons.

“c. Equip U.S. forces in Korea with modern weapons, provided that weapons [1 line of source text not [Page 482] declassified] shall be deployed to Korea only as and when determined by the President after conference with the Secretaries of State and Defense.”

Mr. Cutler then pointed out that the Joint Chiefs of Staff wished to delete, in subparagraph 9–c, the limitations therein on the deployment to Korea [1 line of source text not declassified]. Instead of the version of subparagraph 9–c proposed by the Planning Board, the Joint Chiefs had asked for language to indicate that the Secretary of Defense should seek the concurrence of the Secretary of State and obtain early Presidential approval for the immediate introduction into Korea of weapons possessing an atomic delivery capability [less than 1 line of source text not declassified].

The President inquired whether the older version of these subparagraphs (NSC 5702/1, considered by the Council in March) did not state that the timing of the deployment of such weapons to Korea would be determined by the President. As the President recalled it, the reason for this was our great political need to find out the reaction of our friends and allies to the announcement that we were proposing to modernize U.S. forces in Korea despite Article 13(d).

Mr. Cutler called on Secretary Dulles, but Secretary Wilson interrupted to state that it might be helpful to Secretary Dulles if he, Secretary Wilson, first talked for a moment about the Defense Department position on this issue. He said that his own personal position differed a little from that of many of his colleagues in the Defense Department. While he was quite aware of the military needs for modernizing U.S. forces in Korea, he was also keenly aware of the political and psychological aspects of the problem. Above all, he wished to avoid “heating up” the difficulties in Korea any more than could be helped, and he was also

very concerned about the problem of the costs of modernization. Secretary Wilson added that he had, however, received a report from his people only yesterday, stating that if the package deal proposed in NSC 5702/1 were adopted, we would be able to bring home approximately 8000 American military personnel, and we could cut out four active South Korean divisions, which would save us approximately \$25 million a year. If such savings could be made, Secretary Wilson believed it would be worth while [1 line of source text not declassified] to modernize U.S. forces there.

Secretary Dulles then took the floor, and stated that the general proposal to countermand the provisions of Article 13(d) of the Armistice Agreement had been pretty well received throughout the Free World. The reason for this favorable reaction to our announcement was that our course of action had been carefully planned and carefully worked out with our allies. [7 lines of source text not declassified]

His second point, continued Secretary Dulles, was that this whole modernization plan was a package deal involving [Page 483] a reduction in the force levels of the ROK forces. Secretary Dulles insisted that the United States was not in a position to sustain the costs of supporting the present level of the South Korean forces to the tune of over \$700 million a year. Congress was going to insist on a very sharp cut in our military assistance and defense support programs world-wide. If we continue to try to support the present high levels of the indigenous forces in Korea, we will find ourselves obliged to make drastic reductions in our military aid programs in other parts of the world. Yet, there was so far no evidence whatsoever that we were going to succeed in getting South Korea to agree to a cut in ROK force levels. President Rhee was, as usual, being stubborn and tough in these negotiations. Therefore, Secretary Dulles did not think that it was wise to introduce at this time into Korea weapons [less than 1 line of source text not declassified]—the big ones, such as the Honest John rockets and the 280 mm. cannon—which are primarily psychological in their impact and designed to impress upon the South Koreans the fact that we have really modernized our U.S. forces there.

Secretary Dulles said that the previous argument had been that if our U.S. forces were given such [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] Rhee would be induced to agree to reducing the active divisions of the ROK armed forces. On the other hand, if Rhee does not propose to agree to cut his forces, there was no point in now putting in these [less than 1 line of source text not declassified]. In any event, the timing for the introduction of such weapons should be determined, as suggested in the proposed subparagraph 9-c, by the President in consultation with the Secretaries of State and Defense. The decision would depend primarily on the attitude shown by Rhee in negotiations with our people, and on his willingness to reduce South Korean force levels.

Mr. Cutler indicated his agreement with the Secretary of State's position, and said that that was why the Planning Board had drafted subparagraph 9-c in its present form. He then suggested that General Lemnitzer speak to the Council regarding his recent negotiations with President Rhee.

General Lemnitzer indicated that President Rhee had been very pleased indeed with our decision to suspend Article 13(d) of the Armistice Agreement and to proceed to modernize U.S. forces in Korea. However, President Rhee indicated that he wanted more information on the precise character of the modernization of forces which we contemplated and, particularly, what we had in mind with respect to the modernization of the ROK Army. General Lemnitzer and Ambassador Dowling, following their instructions from Washington, had explained as best they could what we had in mind by way of modernization, [Page 484] but, of course, could not, in accordance with instructions from Washington, make any mention of the 280 mm. cannon or the Honest John rockets.

General Lemnitzer said that President Rhee seemed honestly anxious to be sure that the ROK retained sufficient military power to resist any renewed Communist aggression from the north. Accordingly, General Lemnitzer had come up with the suggestion for a joint study by U.S. and ROK military personnel as to possible reduction in the level of ROK forces in the light of the modernization of U.S. forces in Korea. Actually, continued General Lemnitzer, if you look at the current situation candidly, we are not really modernizing our U.S. forces in Korea as long as the restrictions against the Honest John rockets and the 280 mm. cannon remain in force. Or, at any rate, the ROK authorities do not really believe we are modernizing our forces when they fail to see these atomic-capable weapons. Moreover, General Lemnitzer felt that he must point out that the Honest John rocket and

the 280 mm. cannon were not weapons designed to produce a psychological impact. They constitute valuable defensive weapons and will add greatly to our military strength in Korea. Finally, if Communist aggression should recur in Korea, we would find it very difficult to explain to the American people why we had not provided our forces in Korea with the most modern and efficient weapons in our possession.

Secretary Dulles took exception to these last remarks of General Lemnitzer, and said that it was his understanding that the Council had been shown a rather lengthy list of modern weapons which were to be supplied to our forces in Korea, and that of this long list the State Department had taken exception to the deployment of only two types—namely, the Honest John rocket and the 280 mm. cannon. General Lemnitzer replied that he did not deny the accuracy of Secretary Dulles' statement, but said that the other modern weapons were really not very significant as compared to the Honest John rocket and the 280 mm. cannon. These were the two big weapons.

Secretary Dulles replied that if this were the case, he still could not see why we should now play our trump card—that is, these two big weapons—until President Rhee had agreed to reduce the ROK force levels in exchange for the deployment of these atomic-capable weapons.

Secretary Wilson intervened to point out that the deployment of the Honest John rockets and the 280 mm. cannon was particularly designed to bar the invasion route from North Korea into South Korea.

Mr. Cutler said that it seemed to him that subparagraph 9–c, as proposed by the Planning Board, was admirably designed to settle this question. The President disagreed with Mr. Cutler, and pointed out that General Lemnitzer was bringing [Page 485] up a different argument—namely, that our U.S. divisions in Korea ought to have the Honest John rockets and the 280 mm. cannon as basic weapons. Secretary Dulles, on the other hand, was arguing that we should not introduce these weapons into South Korea until President Rhee had agreed to reduce ROK force levels. In any event, continued the President, we ought now to be in a position to go to Rhee and state that if he will agree to certain reductions in ROK force levels, we in turn will agree to modernize our U.S. forces in Korea with Honest John rockets and the 280 mm. cannon.

Mr. Cutler commented that this proposal of the President's was likewise in accordance with the proposed subparagraph 9–c.

Admiral Radford then pointed out that as yet [1 line of source text not declassified]. The President expressed surprise, and said that he thought this proposal had been agreed to when the National Security Council last discussed the Korean policy paper.

Mr. Cutler remarked that [2 lines of source text not declassified]. As he understood it, this matter would be handled elsewhere.⁶

At this point, Secretary Dulles read portions of President Rhee's recent letter to President Eisenhower⁷—portions which indicated Rhee's concern that the ROK forces should be modernized as well as the U.S. forces. Secretary Dulles warned that it was going to cost an awful lot of money if the United States found itself obliged to modernize both the South Korean and the U.S. divisions in Korea. Admiral Radford pointed out that at least we could pass on some of our older equipment to the ROK divisions as the U.S. forces are progressively modernized with new weapons. Admiral Radford also pointed out that the process of modernizing U.S. forces would carry over a considerable period of time.

Secretary Dulles expressed some frank and unflattering views of President Rhee. President Rhee appeared to him as essentially an Oriental bargainer. In the best of circumstances it was going to be very hard to get him to agree to a reduction of the ROK forces. Indeed, to achieve this we may have to give him a heavy jolt, because he is a master of evasion.

Secretary Wilson suggested that the best way to provide a jolt for President Rhee would be to hold back U.S. funds.

Mr. Cutler said that it seemed to him that General Lemnitzer believed that if, in the course of further negotiations, we could mention the Honest John rockets and the 280 mm. cannon, we could probably bring Rhee to accept the desired reduction in ROK force levels. General Lemnitzer confirmed this view.

Secretary Dulles then inquired whether it would not be wise to send some kind of communication to our people in Korea after the conclusion of this meeting. The President said that it would be very hard to get all the nuances expressed in a single statement, but suggested that the Secretaries of State and Defense try to formulate a statement and perhaps send qualified personnel to take the statement to Korea.

Admiral Radford once again stressed the fact that one of the major purposes of modernizing U.S. forces in Korea [**less than 1 line of source text not declassified**] was to safeguard the security of our forces there.

Mr. Cutler then went on to say that the remaining revised paragraphs proposed by the NSC Planning Board—namely, paragraphs 10 and 19—were not very controversial. He read subparagraph 10–a, as follows:

“10. With respect to ROK forces through FY 1958:

“a. Negotiate with the Republic of Korea for a substantial reduction in active ROK forces (by at least four active divisions at this time, with no increases in reserve divisions); in return for converting the three remaining conventional ROK fighter-bomber squadrons into jet squadrons and providing to ground forces currently programmed improved transport and communications equipment, and taking into account the modernization of U.S. forces in Korea.”

The President said he approved of this version of subparagraph 10–a, and stated that we must now be in a position to inform President Rhee of precisely what we propose to do by way of modernizing U.S. forces in Korea.

Secretary Wilson said that with respect to subparagraph 10–a, the Defense Department did not wish to agree that there could be no increase in reserve ROK divisions to compensate for the reduction of four active ROK divisions. After all, said Secretary Wilson, it was much less expensive to support reserve divisions than active divisions. Admiral Radford pointed out that Secretary Wilson’s view did not conform entirely to the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. When the Joint Chiefs had looked into the matter, they had found that the cost of maintaining reserve divisions was still very high.

The President suggested that the language should not be made too restrictive, and that leeway should be given to our people who were negotiating with Rhee. Mr. Cutler then suggested that the word “minimum” should be substituted for the word “no” in the third line of subparagraph 10–a.

In a philosophical vein, the President observed that when you look at this little finger of South Korea sticking out of mainland Asia, you recall that the statement made by the Joint Chiefs of Staff ten years ago⁸ is as true today as it was then— [Page 487] namely, the statement that while Korea is of no military importance to us in general war, it is psychologically and politically of such importance that to lose it would run the risk of the loss of our entire position in the Far East. Accordingly, we have got to carry on in South Korea.

Mr. Cutler then pointed out that there remained one more split in NSC 5702/1 which should be resolved. This related to paragraph 23, where a course of action was set forth indicating what the United States should do or consider doing if, despite the actions taken under Annex F,⁹ ROK forces should renew hostilities unilaterally. The State Department wished to insert the term that the United States should “consider” these further courses of action; the majority of the Planning Board was of the opinion that, after all the prior steps the United States would have taken to prevent the renewal of hostilities unilaterally by the ROK, we would not merely “consider” these additional courses of action, but would proceed to take them at once.

Secretary Dulles stated that this difference of opinion brought to mind a saying frequently used by the President, to the effect that “Planning is essential, though the plans themselves may not be important.” If war were to start again in Korea, said Secretary Dulles, it was going to be very hard indeed to determine which side had begun the war. Accordingly, while it was desirable to have all these plans of action in mind, it was not going to be easy to determine now, in advance of the event, precisely what courses of action would be mandatory on the United States.

The President commented that the best thing to insert here was what the French had said to the Russians at the outbreak of war in 1914, that is: “France will do whatever is in its own best interests.”

The National Security Council:¹⁰

a. Discussed the proposed revisions of paragraphs 9, 10 and 19 of NSC 5702/1, prepared by the NSC Planning Board and transmitted by the reference memorandum of August 5, 1957; in the light of the Interim Report on Korea (transmitted by the reference memorandum of July 30, 1957), the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (transmitted by the reference memorandum of August 7, 1957), and the comments of General Lemnitzer at the meeting.

b. Adopted the statement of policy in NSC 5702/1, subject to the following amendments:

(1) **Paragraph 9, page 4:** Revise to read as follows:

“9. a. Continue through the period FY 1958 to deploy in Korea a minimum of two U.S. infantry divisions and [Page 4,88] one fighter-bomber wing with necessary support forces.

“b. Replace existing equipment of U.S. forces in Korea, including planes, with improved models of such equipment as and when required for military reasons.

“c. Equip U.S. forces in Korea with modern weapons; provided that the timing of the deployment to Korea of dual capability (nuclear-conventional) weapons, such as the Honest John and the 280 mm. cannon, [less than 1 line of source text not declassified] will be as and when determined by the President after conference with the Secretaries of State and Defense.”

(2) **Paragraph 10, page 5:** Revise to read as follows:

“10. With respect to ROK forces through FY 1958:

- “a. Negotiate with the Republic of Korea for a substantial reduction in active ROK forces (by at least four active divisions at this time, with minimum increase in reserve divisions) in return for converting the three remaining conventional ROK fighter-bomber squadrons into jet squadrons and providing to ground forces currently-programmed improved transport and communications equipment and appropriate U.S. equipment in Korea declared excess to the needs of U.S. forces there, and taking into account the modernization of U.S. forces in Korea.
- “b. Continue the ROK Navy at its present level of approximately 61 combatant ships and one Marine Division.
- “c. Plan for gradual further reductions in ROK forces in the longer range. Such planning would take account of the enemy situation, the effect of the initial reductions, and the over-all level of U.S. military assistance programs world-wide.
- “d. Continue military assistance to the Republic of Korea to carry out these military programs and objectives.”

(3) **Paragraph 19-a, page 8:** Revise to read as follows:

“19. In accordance with the U.S. statement issued June 21, 1957 (Annex G),¹¹ continue to observe and support the Korean Armistice Agreement, and to this end:

“a. Establish through adequate evidence, the nature and scope of any violations of the Armistice Agreement by the Communist side, especially with respect to Article 13(D). Continue to publicize to the maximum extent feasible the fact that the Communists, with the connivance of the Communist members of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission, have violated provisions of the Armistice Agreement since its inception.”

(4) **Paragraph 19-b, page 9:** Delete, and reletter subparagraphs c and d as b and c.

(5) **Paragraph 23, page 12:** Include the bracketed word, and delete the asterisk and the footnote relating thereto.

c. Authorized adding, as Annex G to NSC 5702/1, the United Nations Command Statement of June 21, 1957, to the Military Armistice Commission at Panmunjom, Korea.

- d. Noted the President's authorization that the United States, in carrying on the negotiations with President Rhee directed by NSC Action No. 1731-b-(2), might refer, at an appropriate time, to equipping U.S. forces in Korea with dual capability (nuclear-conventional) weapons, such as the Honest John and the 280 mm. cannon.
- e. Noted the President's directive that the Departments of State and Defense prepare a summary statement, for guidance to Ambassador Dowling and General Decker in carrying on negotiations with President Rhee, of actions now authorized to be taken with respect to Korea; and consider the advisability of sending qualified personnel to Korea with such summary statement.

Note: NSC 5702/1, as amended, subsequently approved by the President and circulated as NSC 5702/2 for implementation by all appropriate Executive departments and agencies of the U.S. Government, and referred to the Operations Coordinating Board as the coordinating agency designated by the President.

The actions in d and e above, as approved by the President, subsequently transmitted to the Secretaries of State and Defense for appropriate implementation.

[Here follows agenda item 8.]

S. Everett Gleason

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1. Source: Eisenhower Library, Whitman File, NSC Records. Top Secret; Eyes Only. Drafted by Gleason on August 9.↵
 2. See footnote 8, Document 221.↵
 3. This memorandum from Executive Secretary Lay transmitted to the NSC an interim report prepared jointly by the Departments of State and Defense in accordance with NSC Action No. 1731-c. The report assessed the international reaction to the U.N. Command statement on June 21 in the Military Armistice Commission, and the results of discussions with President Rhee concerning a reduction in Republic of Korea force levels. The interim report is undated, but it was conveyed to Cutler under cover of a memorandum from Leonhart of S/P dated July 29. The July 30 memorandum by Lay and attached report are in Department of State, S/S-NSC Files: Lot 63 D 351, NSC 5702 Series. A copy of the July 29 memorandum by Leonhart, with attached report, is *Ibid.*, S/P Files: Lot 62 D 1, Korea, US Policy Toward (NSC 5702, 5702/1, 5702/2).↵
 4. In this memorandum, Lay circulated to the NSC revised versions of paragraphs 9, 10, and 19 of NSC 5702/1. The revised paragraphs were drafted by the NSC Planning Board after consideration of the interim report cited in footnote 3 above. Subparagraphs a, b, and c of paragraph 9 are quoted in the memorandum of discussion printed here in connection with Cutler's preliminary briefing. Subparagraph 10a is quoted later in the discussion. The language of the revised paragraphs proposed by the Planning Board was adopted in large measure in the policy statement approved on August 9 as NSC 5702/2, infra. The Planning Board revisions differ from the language ultimately adopted in NSC 5702/2 in the following respects: (1) in accordance with a JCS recommendation, the qualifying phrase "a minimum of" was inserted in subparagraph 9a after "to deploy in Korea"; (2) the qualifying clause in subparagraph 9c of the Planning Board revision reads: "provided that weapons [1 line of source text not declassified] shall be deployed to Korea only as and when determined by the President after conferences with the Secretaries of State and Defense"; (3) the word "minimum" was substituted for the word "no" in subparagraph 10a as indicated in the memorandum of discussion printed here. (Department of State, S/S-NSC Files: Lot 63 D 351, NSC 5702 Series)↵
 5. On August 7, Lay circulated to the NSC, under cover of an explanatory memorandum, a copy of a memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense, dated August 6. The memorandum by the Joint Chiefs contained their views on the proposed revisions of paragraph 9 of NSC 5702/1. As noted in footnote 4 above, the change which they proposed in subparagraph 9a was incorporated in the policy statement as finally adopted by the NSC. The other change they proposed, which was to delete all of the qualifying elements in subparagraph 9c so as to reduce it to a simple

statement reading “Equip U.S. forces in Korea with modern weapons,” was not adopted by the NSC. The Joint Chiefs felt that the remainder of the proposed revised paragraphs were “acceptable from a military point of view”. (*Ibid.*)↵

6. Footnote [16-1/2 lines of text] not declassified.↵

7. *Supra.*↵

8. See Foreign Relations, 1949. VII, Part 2, p. 976, footnote 10. ↵

9. Annex F, which is not attached to the copies of NSC 5702/2 found in Department of State files, was handled separately on a restricted basis. It is printed, as circulated, as an enclosure to Document 207.↵

10. Paragraphs a–e and the Note that follows constitute NSC Action No. 1772, approved by President Eisenhower on August 9. (Department of State, S/S–NSC (Miscellaneous) Files: Lot 66 D 95, Records of Action by the National Security Council)↵

11. See Document 225.↵

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