

**June 24, 1975**

**Memorandum for General Scowcroft from W.R. Smyser, "Defense of the Northwest UNC-Controlled Islands in Korea"**

**Citation:**

"Memorandum for General Scowcroft from W.R. Smyser, "Defense of the Northwest UNC-Controlled Islands in Korea", June 24, 1975, Wilson Center Digital Archive, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, National Security Adviser Presidential Country Files for East Asia and the Pacific, Box 9, Korea (7). Obtained for NKIDP by Charles Kraus.  
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/114037>

**Summary:**

Richard Smyser writes to General Brent Scowcroft about the defense of the five islands off the northwest coast of Korea and whether or not the defense of these islands is bound to the U.S.-South Korea Mutual Defense Treaty.

**Credits:**

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**Original Language:**

English

**Contents:**

Original Scan  
Transcript - English

MEMORANDUM

4333

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

SECRET GDS

ACTION

June 24, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR:

GENERAL SCOWCROFT

FROM:

W. R. SMYSER

SUBJECT:

Defense of the Northwest UNC-Controlled Islands in Korea

Heightened concern about North Korea's intentions in the wake of the Indochina collapse has underscored the vulnerability of the five islands off the northwest coast of Korea. President Park, in a letter of May 12 to ROK Defense Minister Suh, instructed the Minister to work out jointly with General Stilwell a coordinated plan for the defense of the islands in case of large-scale surprise attack by the enemy. Minister Suh, in a subsequent letter to General Stilwell of May 13 requested that a clear-cut policy on the defense of the islands be established as soon as possible. Minister Suh specifically requested that the plans provide for the contingency employment of U.S. air and naval forces in the defense of the islands (see Tab B).

The issue is whether or not we should affirm that the islands indeed fall under the MDT and thus whether or not to engage in joint planning. (A year ago when the ROK unilaterally reinforced the island garrison

[REDACTED] If we assume that joint planning is now appropriate and necessary, [REDACTED]

Ambassador Sneider and General Stilwell have both recommended that we engage in joint planning regarding the islands [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

DECLASSIFIED w/ portions exempted

E.O. 12958 (as amended) SEC 3.3

MR # 10-130, #10

state ltr 9/17/10; OSD ltr 9/25/10

By dal NARA, Date 12/8/10

SECRET GDS



SECRET

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State/Defense Position

A joint State/Defense message attached at Tab A reaffirms that the islands fit the definition of territory under ROK administrative control and therefore come under the MDT. The message authorizes CINCUNC to discuss planning for the defense of the islands with a view toward reaching understanding that (a) the ROK will not act precipitously and unilaterally and CINCUNC will exercise opcon of ROK forces; and (b) in the event of an attack on the islands, CINCUNC will immediately commit ROK forces but these commitments must not jeopardize the capability to defend the ROK as a whole.

Our ViewSECRET

SECRET

[REDACTED]

Except for this addition, we recommend approval of the joint State/ Defense message. Joint planning will remove the element of ambiguity regarding our commitment, will reassure the ROK, and once Pyongyang hears of it may constrain DPRK adventures. By asserting CINCUNC opcon, we will also be better able to control ROK response and to head off any precipitous ROK effort

[REDACTED]

RECOMMENDATION:

That you approve the joint Defense/State cable at Tab A with our recommended addition.

APPROVE \_\_\_\_\_ DISAPPROVE \_\_\_\_\_

Approve without our addition \_\_\_\_\_

*Review guidance  
in cable in wake  
of Dec Schlesinger's  
trip. (and outcome  
his talks) Jim  
per BS.*



SECRET

MEMORANDUM 4333

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

SECRET GDS ACTION

June 24, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: GENERAL SCOWCROFT

FROM: W.R. SMYSER

SUBJECT: Defense of the Northwest UNC-Controlled  
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Heightened concern about North Korea's intentions in the wake of the Indochina collapse has underscored the vulnerability of the five islands off the northwest coast of Korea. President Park, in a letter of May 12 to ROK Defense Minister Suh, instructed the Minister to work out jointly with General Stilwell a coordinated plan for the defense of the islands in case of large-scale surprise attack by the enemy. Minister Suh, in a subsequent letter to General Stilwell of May 13 requested that a clear-cut policy on the defense of the islands be established as soon as possible. Minister Suh specifically requested that the plans provide for the contingency employment of U.S. air and naval forces in the defense of the islands (see Tab B).

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Recommendation

That you approve the joint Defense/State cable at Tab A with our recommend addition.

Approve \_\_\_\_ Disapprove \_\_\_\_

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Approve without our addition \_\_\_\_\_