

June 30, 1975
**US Department of State Cable, ROK Nuclear Fuel
Reprocessing Plans**

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<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/114619>

Summary:

A report on America's discussions with French and Canadian suppliers on the South Korean nuclear program, as well as on U.S. policy towards reprocessing in the ROK.

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RELATING TO THE REACTOR AND TO THE USE OF SPENT FUEL. IT IS OUR ASSESSMENT THAT PROSPECTS FOR APPROVAL OF THE LOAN WILL BE SMALL UNLESS ROK HAS AGREED NOT TO DEVELOP A NATIONAL REPROCESSING CAPABILITY. WITH SUCH AN ACTION WE WOULD HOPE THAT THE LOAN COULD BE APPROVED.

3. WE BELIEVE THAT IT WOULD NOW BE TIMELY TO EXECUTE SECOND PHASE OF APPROACH WITH KOREANS ON REPROCESSING OUTLINED IN REFS D AND E. THIS MESSAGE HAS BEEN PREPARED ON ASSUMPTION THAT ROK WILL HAVE ALREADY ACCEPTED OUR INTERPRETATION OF AGREEMENT FOR COOPERATION. SINCE REF F INDICATES ROKG CONFIRMATION OF US INTERPRETATION, EMBASSY SHOULD EXPRESS APPRECIATION FOR ROKG AIDE-MEMOIRE BEFORE USING TALKING POINTS IN PARA. 4 AND SPECIFICALLY REQUESTING THE ROKG NOT TO PROCEED WITH ITS PLANNED REPROCESSING PLANT.

4. ACCORDINGLY YOU SHOULD APPROACH ROKG WITH THE FOLLOWING POINTS, SLIGHTLY REVISED FROM THE OUTLINE IN REF D:

A. THE US HAS BEEN GIVING SERIOUS ATTENTION TO KOREA'S ASPIRATION TO ACQUIRE ITS OWN REPROCESSING CAPABILITY, STARTING WITH A PILOT FACILITY THAT MIGHT EVOLVE INTO A LARGER-SCALE REGIONAL CAPABILITY. ALTHOUGH RECOGNIZING THAT AT SOME FUTURE TIME THE NATIONS IN THE AREA MIGHT HAVE A COMMERCIAL NEED FOR REPROCESSING, WE HAVE SERIOUS CONCERNS ABOUT KOREA'S MOVING IN THIS DIRECTION ON ITS OWN.

B. IN PARTICULAR, ALTHOUGH KOREA HAS RATIFIED THE NPT, STEPS TOWARD EVEN A PILOT REPROCESSING FACILITY IN KOREA COULD BE DESTABILIZING AND COULD RAISE SERIOUS APPREHENSIONS WHICH COULD IMPAIR US-KOREAN NUCLEAR RELATIONSHIPS.

C. THERE ARE WIDESPREAD CONCERNS WITHIN THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH AS WELL AS IN THE CONGRESS ON THE SUBJECT OF REPROCESSING AND STORAGE OF PLUTONIUM FROM SPENT FUEL, THAT ARE VERY LIKELY TO AFFECT OUR ABILITY TO MOVE PROMPTLY ON KOREA'S NUCLEAR REQUESTS SHOULD KOREA CONTINUE IN ITS DESIRE TO ACQUIRE AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL REPROCESSING CAPABILITY, STARTING WITH A PILOT FACILITY.

D. IT IS TO BE NOTED IN THIS REGARD THAT THE ISSUE OF AN EXPORT-IMPORT BANK LOAN FOR THE ROK IS BEFORE CONGRESS. THIS LOAN MAY WELL BE DISAPPROVED UNLESS THESE CONCERNS REGARDING REPROCESSING AND STORAGE OF FISSILE

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