

1979**US National Security Council Cable, Korea Trilateral
-- Response to Foreign Ministry Dialogue****Citation:**

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Summary:

The National Security Council outlines its views of tripartite talks involving North Korea, South Korea, and the United States.

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E.O. 12065: RDS-3, 6/8/99 (HOLBROOKE, RICHARD)

SUBJECT: KOREA TRILATERAL -- RESPONSE TO FOREIGN MINISTRY
DIALOGUE

REFS: (A) Seoul 8350, (B) Seoul 8365

1. (S) - Entire text.
2. Consultations reported in reftels have been most helpful, and we are pleased at the constructive and thoughtful approach obviously being taken by ROKG on this matter. Ambassador is authorized to convey following additional points in response to questions Foreign Minister and Assistant Minister have raised.
3. We fully agree that dramatic new initiatives must be made under conditions which will encourage a favorable result. Joint announcement of a proposal by the two presidents would clearly symbolize the ROK-US cooperation on this issue, and present Pyongyang with a proposal which shows that we cannot be divisively manipulated.
4. Following replies are keyed to questions in para 3 of Ref b.

A. As Ambassador and Charge have made clear, we believe a proposal usefully can be made for a high-level trilateral meeting, not necessarily at the Summit.

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B. Yes. USG feels confident in our security cooperation with the ROKG and the basis which this provides for discussing joint diplomatic efforts. We understand the importance of firmly maintaining security on the one hand while on the other seeking together to test North Korean willingness to reduce tensions. These two halves together make up a dynamic ROK-US strategy, and one is not a replacement for the other.

C. Trying too carefully to define tripartite talks does not appear to be productive. The USG approaches such talks from the standpoint that: (1) we are involved because we have military forces on the peninsula and we are a signatory of the armistice; (2) we are the ally of the ROK; and (3) basic decisions can only be reached through agreement of both North and South Korea. In a trilateral meeting we expect that US and ROK would collaborate closely, and that ROK would take the lead in formulating substantive positions. We will not enter into bilateral discussions with North Korea with ROK agreement. We have confirmed this on numerous occasions.

D. Most important aspect of any agenda in our view is that it be open for discussion of any subject proposed by either side. This is consistent with current ROKG proposals. Hopefully, a conference could move promptly toward some earnest by each side of its determination to reduce tensions.

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More specific issues can be worked out in close collaboration between ROK and US later, but our thinking is similar to ROKG proposals for measures such as North-South trade and contact, as well as some measures to reduce military dangers. A fundamental early achievement of any trilateral meeting should be the clear establishment of equality of North Korean dealings with the ROK, and ultimately the development of ongoing mechanisms for contact and dialogue.

E. We do favor a clear proposal being announced at the Summit.

F. We have not put this proposal to the PRC, although at some juncture it will be useful to do so. As is befitting between allies on a matter of primary concern to the ROKG, we have raised this subject first with President Park. Subsequently we have on a very private basis informed Ohira that ROK and USG are discussing whether we might make a proposal during the Summit. We are not carrying on any discussion of the matter with the Japanese, however.

G. (para 4, Ref B) We agree that North Korea has appeared to continue to press for DPRK-US bilateral meetings. We do not have any real evidence that Pyongyang would agree to a meeting such as we are discussing, but it is important that the ROK and US seize the initiative and probe the North Korean position. The combination of changes in North Korea's external environment, ROK growth, and North

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Korean economic difficulties must collectively be placing increasing pressure on Kim Il-sung to change North Korean policies. Diplomatic efforts which are closely coordinated between the ROK and US to prevent arousing Pyongyang's hopes of manipulation can increase the pressure for the necessary change in the North's policy of rejecting coexistence.

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