

January 14, 1971

**Letter, UNCURK Principal Secretary Kuzbari to UN
Chef de Cabinet Narasimhan, Withdrawal of ROK
Troops from Vietnam**

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Summary:

During a press conference, President Park Chung Hee announces the withdrawal of ROK troops from Vietnam. Kuzbari notes that this decision is likely due to the upcoming presidential election, the strong opposition party, and the withdrawal of US troops from the ROK.

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NATIONS UNIES

UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION FOR THE UNIFICATION AND REHABILITATION OF KOREA
(UNCURK)CONFIDENTIAL

Seoul, 14 January 1971

Dear Mr. Narasimhan,

The announcement made by President Park Chung Hee in his press conference on 11 January 1971 that the Republic of Korea troops will be withdrawn soon from Viet-Nam is regarded here as an important decision prompted by international and domestic considerations. The President stated that a "step by step" reduction of the Republic of Korea forces in Viet-Nam is being studied and that the time-table for this move will be decided after consultation with the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam itself, the United States and other participating Asian countries in the War.

Although the reason given for this decision appears, in his words, to be the success of the Vietnamisation of the War, the timing of his announcement, however, leaves no doubt that he had the next presidential election pretty much on his mind. The opposition New Democratic Party's presidential candidate (Mr. Kim Dae Jung) took strong issue with him recently on that question and pledged that, if elected, he would withdraw the Republic of Korea forces from South Viet-Nam. In addition, it has become difficult for the Republic of Korea Government to justify the continued presence of its forces in South Viet-Nam now that the United States Government has decided to withdraw all its combat troops by next summer. As is also generally known, the issue of the participation of the South Korean forces in the Viet-Nam War has been a controversial one in South Korea and the President, while following the steps of the United States Government to disengage itself in Viet-Nam, may also aim at depriving the opposition party of one of the important election issues.

It is useful to recall here that the Republic of Korea first sent its troops to Viet-Nam in July 1964 under a special agreement with the United States Government. Since that time

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Mr. C.V. Narasimhan
Chef de Cabinet
United Nations
New York

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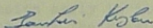
the Republic of Korea had always maintained approximately two full army divisions numbering 50,000 soldiers, a marine brigade and other supporting units in Viet-Nam. The economic benefits which this Government had reaped through the Viet-Nam War were also quite noticeable.

Although the President did not link the question of the Republic of Korea troops withdrawal from Viet-Nam with that of the United States troops reduction in South Korea, it is generally recognized that the return of the Republic of Korea forces to their homeland could fill in the gap created by the departing U.S. troops.

In the meantime, political observers here, who had always questioned the wisdom of the Republic of Korea Government's decision in 1964 to involve itself in the Viet-Nam War, feel now that the time has come to defuse the Viet-Nam War by putting an end to the participation of foreign troops in that country.

With warmest personal regards,

Yours sincerely,



Zouheir Kuzbari
Principal Secretary