

February 19, 1971

**Letter, UNCURK Principal Secretary Kuzbari to UN
Chef de Cabinet Narasimhan**

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Summary:

The ROK-US airlift military exercise "Freedom Vault" raises tensions with North Korean. The timing of the exercise may also bolster the current administration's prospect for reelection. Additionally, ROK troops are replacing US troops in the DMZ.

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UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

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

Seoul, 19 February 1971

Dear Mr. Narasimhan,

The joint ROK-US airlift military exercise, known as "Freedom Vault" and scheduled to take place between the 2nd and 6th of March 1971 was the hot issue around which the Military Armistice Commission meeting of 17 February was held. The North Korean delegate to the MAC, Major-General Han Yong Ok, brought up this question and accused the United Nations Command that the airlift exercise will result at increasing tension in the Korean peninsula, and warned that the introduction of various heavy weapons in connexion with the exercise is a clear violation of the Armistice Agreement. On his part, the senior member of the United Nations Command, Major-General Felix M. Rogers, stated that the objective of the exercise is to demonstrate the UNC's capability to meet any unexpected military situation and is not in any term contrary to the provisions of the Armistice Agreement. He further emphasized in his statement that the UNC forces in the Republic of Korea are to help maintaining peace and pose no threat to North Korea.

There is no doubt, however, that the airlift exercise, though described as purely of a military character, has also some political undertones. Coming only two months before the presidential election, the exercise will indirectly bolster the position of the ruling Government party in a sense that, although the Government was unable to delay the process of the United States troops reduction in the Republic of Korea, the United States Government took the step of demonstrating its capability to come to the help of the Republic of Korea in any time of emergency. This airlift exercise is similar in nature to the 1969's operations "Focus Retina", known as the longest airborne assault in the military history of the United States and during which U.S. infantrymen were parachuted with their heavy equipment in actual combat zones.

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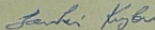
Mr. C.V. Narasimhan
Chef de Cabinet
United Nations
New York

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In another development, the UNC sources disclosed this week that the Republic of Korea troops have begun to replace the United States forces along the Demilitarized Zone and have taken the positions manned by the United States soldiers since 1953. The deployment of the Republic of Korea forces is an implementation of the joint US-ROK agreement resulting from the reduction of the United States troops in Korea, and is viewed here as an important test for South Korea to assume defence responsibilities. Much may depend from now on the degree of restraint and discipline that those troops will show in the very delicate situation along the Demilitarized Zone.

With warmest personal regards,

Yours sincerely,



Zouheir Kusbari
Principal Secretary