



**May 21, 1980**

**Cable from the US Embassy in Seoul to the US  
Secretary of State, 'The Kwangju Crisis'**

**Citation:**

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**Summary:**

Ambassador Gleysteen writes that the "massive insurrection in Kwangju is still out of control."

**Credits:**

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**Original Language:**

English

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Original Scan



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MESSAGE (CONTINUOUS)

3. GENERAL NICKHAM HAS AGREED TO A HIGH INTERNAL ALERT STATUS AGAINST INFILTRATION, AND HE HAS INFORMALLY TAKEN SOME MEASURES ASSOCIATED WITH DEFCON 3. HE HAS ALSO URGED THAT DEFENSE CONSIDER WHAT FORCE AUGMENTATIONS MIGHT BE POSSIBLE IF HE BECAME INCREASINGLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE POTENTIAL FOR NORTH KOREAN EXPLOITATION. HE HAS BEEN CAREFUL TO AVOID ANY FORMAL ACTIONS WHICH MIGHT BE PROVOCATIVE AND LEAD TO AN ESCALATION WITH NORTH KOREA.

4. WE HAVE DISCUSSED, IN ADDITION, WHAT WE MIGHT DO. ONE MAN WHO COULD HELP IF HE WERE WILLING WOULD BE KIM DAE JUNG, BUT HE IS IN JAIL AND PROBABLY WOULD NOT BE WILLING TO BE HELPFUL UNLESS HE COULD EXTRACT FAR-REACHING CONCESSIONS. NO OTHER HEROES ARE LIKELY TO STEP FORWARD. IF THE RIOTING GETS EVEN MORE SERIOUS, I SUGGEST THE DEPARTMENT CONSIDER REITERATION OF THE MAY 13 STATEMENT FOCUSING IT ON A CALL FOR ALL CONCERNED TO CALM THE SITUATION, ESTABLISH A DIALOGUE WITH EACH OTHER, AND AVOID A FISSURE WHICH COULD GREATLY INCREASE EXTERNAL THREATS. THE STATEMENT COULD CONCLUDE BY TAKING NOTE OF PYONGYANG'S PROTESTATIONS OF INNOCENCE AND STATE THAT WE INTEND TO HOLD THEM TO THEIR DECLARATION. AS OF NOW, I AM AGAINST ANY LOCAL AMERICAN STATEMENT BECAUSE IT COULD BACKFIRE WITH CHARGES THAT WE WERE IN COLLUSION WITH THE GOVERNMENT. A STATEMENT IN WASHINGTON WHICH BALANCED THE CALL FOR MODERATION TO BOTH SIDES WOULD POSE LESS DIFFICULTY. UNFORTUNATELY, NO AMERICAN STATEMENT IN A SITUATION OF CENSORSHIP AND RIOTING IS GOING TO BE HEARD BY MANY PEOPLE. GLEYSTEEN

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