May 21, 1980

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

Citation:

Summary:

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

Credits:

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

761

*******S E C R E T*******

DATE 28/28/82   WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM   PAGE 001

WHSR COMMENT:

ZB AAR DEN VP   0245
EOB:GREGG,KIM

MESSAGE ANNOTATIONS:

NO MESSAGE ANNOTATIONS

MESSAGE:

IMMEDIATE
DE RUEHUL #8463 1421003
O 210955Z MAY 82
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6483

S E C R E T SEOUL 08463
EXDIS
E.O. 12065: RDS-3 5/21/00 (GLEYSTEEN, W.H.) OR-M
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PINS, KS
SUBJECT: THE KWANGJU CRISIS

1. (S – ENTIRE TEXT)

2. THE MASSIVE INSURRECTION IN KWANGJU IS STILL OUT OF
CONTROL AND POSES AN ALARMING SITUATION FOR THE ROK MILI-
TARY WHO HAVE NOT FACED A SIMILAR INTERNAL THREAT FOR AT
LEAST TWO DECADES. THE IMMEDIATE CAUSE IS OBVIOUSLY THE
EXTENT TO WHICH THE POLITICAL CRACKDOWN HIT KIM DAE JUNG
(M-R: KIM TAE-CHUNG) AND OTHER NATIVES OF CHOLLA, BUT BY
NOW ALMOST ALL ELEMENTS OF THE POPULATION SEEM TO BE
ENGAGED IN A VIOLENT, PROVINCIAL FREE FOR ALL REFLECTING
DEEP-SEATED HISTORICAL, PROVINCIAL ANTAGONISMS. AT LEAST
150,000 PEOPLE ARE INVOLVED, THERE HAS BEEN GREAT DESTRUC-
TION, AND OUR MOST RECENT INFORMATION IS THAT THE RIOTERS
HAVE BROKEN INTO ARMORIES AND SEIZED WEAPONS, LIVE
AMMUNITION, AND DEMOLITIONS. THE KOREAN ARMY PLANS TO
PULL ITS MILITARY FORCES OUT OF THE CITY TONIGHT, MAINTAIN-
ING ROADBLOCKS AND CONCENTRATING DEFENSE ON TWO MILITARY
INSTALLATIONS AND A PRISON CONTAINING 2,000 LEFTISTS. THE
AUTHORITIES ARE TRYING TO GET A CEASEFIRE SO THAT THEY CAN
TALK TO THE RIOTERS ABOUT THEIR DEMANDS FOR AN APOLOGY,
RELEASE OF PRISONERS, AND REMOVAL OF MARTIAL LAW FORCES.
WHILE ALL THESE MOVES SEEM INTELLIGENT, THEY HAVE NOT
WORKED SO FAR AND THE DECEMBER 12 GENERALS OBVIOUSLY FEEL
THREATENED BY THE WHOLE AFFAIR.

*******S E C R E T*******

*********S E C R E T*********

DATE(08/08/80   WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM   PAGE 001

MESSAGE (CONTINUED):

3. GENERAL WICKHAM 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 WE BECOME 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 RIOT-
ING GETS EVEN MORE SERIOUS, I SUGGEST THE DEPARTMENT
CONSIDER REITERATION OF THE MAY 18 STATEMENT FOCUSING IT
ON A CALL FOR ALL CONCERNED TO CALM THE SITUATION, ESTAB-
LISH 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 STATE-
MENT 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

PSN: 041056   TOR: 142/1210Z   DTG: 212956Z MAY 80

*********S E C R E T*********

5