

**June 1, 1978**

**Telegram from the Secretary of State to the  
American Embassy in Seoul, 'Dr. Brzezinski's  
Meeting with President Park'**

**Citation:**

"Telegram from the Secretary of State to the American Embassy in Seoul, 'Dr. Brzezinski's Meeting with President Park'", June 1, 1978, Wilson Center Digital Archive, NLC-16-112-3-5-2, Remote Archives Capture, Jimmy Carter Library. Obtained by Charles Kraus <https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/144956>

**Summary:**

Brzezinski briefed President Park on two exchanges with the Chinese leaders. They mainly talked about whether the Chinese leaders behave as spokesmen for Kim Il Sung or not.

**Original Language:**

English

**Contents:**

Original Scan

No Objection To Declassification 2008/06/06 : NLC-16-112-3-5-2

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WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM

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WHSR COMMENT:

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EOMI ARM, OKSEN

DOS REVIEWED 26-Dec-2006: DECLASSIFIED IN FULL

MESSAGE ANNOTATIONS:

NO MESSAGE ANNOTATIONS

MESSAGE:

IMMEDIATE  
DE RUEHC #9335/1 1530009  
O 012351Z JUN 78 ZFFG  
FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SEOUL IMMEDIATE 9831

INFO WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE 0200  
BTS E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 STATE 139335/1  
NDDIS  
E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGSI OVIP, PEPR, KS, US, KN, CH

SUBJECT: DR. BRZEZINSKI'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT PARK

1. FOLLOWING FYI ONLY IS APPROVED MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION FROM DR. BRZEZINSKI'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT PARK AT THE BLUE HOUSE 1100 A.M. TO 2100 P.M., MAY 25, 1978. ALSO PRESENT AT THE MEETING WERE ASSISTANT SECRETARY HOLBROOKE, MICHAEL ARMAGOST, OF THE NSC STAFF, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY GLEYSTEEN AND AMBASSADOR SNEIDER. ASSISTING PRESIDENT PARK WERE KIM CHOM YONG, BLUE HOUSE CHIEF OF STAFF, SUH JYONG CHUL, MEMBER OF ROK NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL, KIM KYONG WON, SPECIAL ASSISTANT FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND CHOE KWAN SU, PROTOCOL SECRETARY FOR THE PRESIDENT.

2. BEGINTEXT

A) AFTER AN OPENING EXCHANGE OF GREETINGS, DR. BRZEZINSKI HANDED TO PRESIDENT PARK A LETTER FROM PRESIDENT CARTER. MR. CHOE THEREUPON TRANSLATED THE LETTER FOR PRESIDENT PARK

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MESSAGE (CONTINUED):

AND PRESIDENT PARK EXPRESSED APPRECIATION.

B) DR. BRZEZINSKI SAID THAT HE THEN WISHED PRIVATELY TO BRIEF PRESIDENT PARK ON TWO EXCHANGES WITH THE CHINESE LEADERS

REGARDING KOREA. HE EXPRESSLY ASKED THAT THE MINUTES BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL AND NOT BE DISTRIBUTED BEYOND THOSE PARTICIPATING IN THE SMALL SESSION. PRESIDENT PARK AGREED TO DO SO.

C) DR. BRZEZINSKI THEN SAID THAT THE FIRST EXCHANGE TOOK PLACE IN THE COURSE OF A TOUR D'HORIZON WITH FOREIGN MINISTER HUANG HUA. HE THEN READ FROM THE MINUTES OF THAT EXCHANGE, AND SUBSEQUENTLY THE RESPONSE OF THE FOREIGN MINISTER.

D) DR. BRZEZINSKI THEN BRIEFED PRESIDENT PARK ON A BRIEFER EXCHANGE WITH HUA REGARDING KOREA.

E) PRESIDENT PARK COMMENTED THAT THE CHINESE LEADERS APPEARED TO BE SPOKESMEN FOR KIM IL SUNG TO WHICH DR. BRZEZINSKI RESPONDED THAT THEIR RESPONSE WAS A FORMAL POSITION. PARK COMMENTED THAT THE CHINESE LEADERS DO NOT APPEAR TO BE REFLECTING WHAT THEY BELIEVE IN THEIR HEART BUT WHAT KIM IL SUNG HAS SAID TO THEM. DR. BRZEZINSKI COMMENTED THAT THE CHINESE DID NOT ARGUE OR DISCUSS THE KOREA QUESTION BUT MERELY STATED THEIR FORMAL POSITION.

F) PARK COMMENTED THAT WHEN THE CHINESE SPEAK ON KOREA HE FINDS IT DIFFICULT TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER THEY ARE SPEAKING THEIR OWN MINDS OR WHAT KIM HAS ASKED THEM TO SAY. HE HAD THE SAME IMPRESSION AFTER HEARING REPORTS OF CONVERSATIONS THAT TOOK PLACE WITH BOTH SECRETARIES KISSINGER AND VANCE. THE CHINESE REFLECT WHAT KIM WANTS THEM TO SAY.

G) DR. BRZEZINSKI SUGGESTED THAT THE CHINESE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR POLITICAL INFLUENCE DETERIORATING IN NORTH KOREA IF THE CHINESE DO NOT PROVIDE AT LEAST FORMALLY STRONG SUPPORT FOR KIM. ON THE OTHER HAND, THEY WERE FRANK IN DISCUSSING THEIR CONCERNS ABOUT VIETNAM AND SOVIET INFLUENCE THERE. THE CHINESE FACE AN UNCERTAIN SITUATION IN KOREA, A SOVIET CONTROLLED MONGOLIA AND EXPANDING SOVIET INFLUENCE IN VIETNAM.

H) PARK COMMENTED THE CHINESE SEEM TO SPEAK THEIR OWN MIND ON SOME ISSUES, PARTICULARLY NOT ALLOWING THE SOVIET UNION

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MESSAGE (CONTINUED):

TO MEDDLE IN THEIR AFFAIRS. HOWEVER, IN OTHER RESPECTS THEY DO NOT SPEAK CLEARLY AND THEREFORE IT IS MORE DIFFICULT TO DEAL WITH. DR. BRZEZINSKI OBSERVED THAT HE FOUND THE CHINESE ON THE WHOLE REALISTIC, DIRECT, AND AWARE THAT TO A LARGE EXTENT THEY SHARE BROAD STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES WITH THE U.S. PARK RESPONDED THAT THE U.S. AND CHINA BOTH SEEK TO CONTAIN SOVIET EXPANSIONISM, BUT THE CHINESE ARE FAR MORE AFRAID OF THE SOVIETS THAN IS THE UNITED STATES.

THEREFORE, HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND THE CHINESE VIEW ON KOREA.

I) DR. BRZEZINSKI SAID HE SUSPECTED THE REASON FOR THE PRO-VIEW RELATES TO THEIR CONCERN THAT NORTH KOREA COULD DEVELOP AN ORIENTATION NOT UNLIKE THAT OF VIETNAM. IT IS STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT FROM THEIR STANDPOINT THAT THEY NOT BE CONFRONTED BY PRO-SOVIET GOVERNMENTS IN BOTH VIETNAM AND NORTH KOREA. PRESIDENT PARK CONTINUED TO MUSE ABOUT THE DIFFICULTIES OF UNDERSTANDING THE REAL THOUGHTS OF THE CHINESE.

J) DR. BRZEZINSKI NOTED THAT HE FOUND CHINESE ASSESSMENTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE ON THE WHOLE QUITE REALISTIC, UNDOGMATIC, AND BASED INCREASINGLY ON THE VIEW THAT AT THE PRESENT STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT IT IS ESSENTIAL TO PURSUE A TWO-TRACK STRATEGY. ON THE ONE HAND, THE CHINESE, HE SAID, ARE SEEKING TO WIDEN THEIR TECHNOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC TIES WITH THE ADVANCED COUNTRIES -- PRIMARILY THE WESTERN EUROPEANS AND JAPAN, BUT ALSO THE UNITED STATES. AT THE SAME TIME THEY ARE ATTEMPTING TO DEVELOP FURTHER A STRATE-

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TO AMEMBASSY SEOUL IMMEDIATE 9832

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 3 STATE 139338/2

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GIC RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES THAT WILL FACILITATE MUTUALLY REINFORCING POSITIONS IN KEY AREAS. IN DISCUSSIONS WITH CHINESE LEADERS HE SAID HE DISCOVERED THAT WITH RESPECT TO WESTERN EUROPE, AFRICA, THE MIDDLE EAST, SOUTH ASIA, AND TO SOME EXTENT SOUTHEAST ASIA THERE WERE SUBSTANTIAL AREAS OF U.S.-PRC AGREEMENT.

K) PRESIDENT PARK COMMENTED THAT IN TERMS OF THEIR OWN INTERESTS THE CHINESE SHOULD AGREE WITH U.S. POSITIONS ON KOREA, BUT THEY ARE TAKING DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED POSITIONS, TRYING EVIDENTLY TO REFLECT NORTH KOREAN VIEWS. HE ASKED WHAT THEY MIGHT HAVE IN MIND IN REFLECTING PYONGYANG'S VIEWS.

L) DR. BRZEZINSKI INDICATED HIS BELIEF THAT THEIR CONCERNS RELATED ESSENTIALLY TO THE POSSIBLE SPREAD OF SOVIET INFLUENCE. HE FELT THIS WAS NOT SURPRISING, SINCE THE CHINESE ALREADY SEE THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE A SATELLITE IN MONGOLIA.

M) THE CHINESE PERCEIVE ANOTHER PRO-SOVIET SATELLITE HAS BEEN RECENTLY ESTABLISHED IN AFGHANISTAN. THEY ARE ALSO WATCHING WITH ANXIETY INDOCHINA, AND THEY WOULDN'T WANT THAT REPEATED IN NORTH KOREA. IN THEIR VIEW ONE WAY TO AVOID THIS IS TO IDENTIFY WITH NORTH KOREA'S VIEW. HE ASKED IF THE PRESIDENT SAW ANY OTHER EXPLANATION.

N) PRESIDENT PARK SAID THAT HE DID NOT HAVE ANY EXPLANATION.

O) DR. BRZEZINSKI COMMENTED FURTHER THAT KIM IL SUNG KNOWS

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MESSAGE (CONTINUED):

THAT THERE ARE FUNDAMENTAL U.S.-SOVIET DISAGREEMENTS. HE ALSO KNOWS THAT U.S.-CHINESE DIFFERENCES ARE DECLINING, AND THAT THERE IS SOME IDENTITY OF U.S.-PRC STRATEGIC VIEWS. HE SEES THE PRESIDENT'S NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR GOING TO PEKING TO DISCUSS ISSUES ON WHICH U.S.-CHINESE VIEWS MAY CONVERGE WITH A DELEGATION INCLUDING A SENIOR DEFENSE DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL, AN NSC STAFF MEMBER WITH SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE FIELD OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, AND TOP STATE DEPARTMENT EAST ASIA SPECIALISTS. IN THIS CONTEXT, HE NOTED KIM MAY BE PARTICULARLY CONCERNED REGARDING CHINESE INTENTIONS. THUS HE MIGHT BE MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO SOVIET BLANDISHMENTS. IF ONE TAKES ALL OF THIS INTO ACCOUNT, HE SAID, CHINESE VIEWS MAY NOT BE SO DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN.

P) PRESIDENT PARK ACKNOWLEDGED THAT CHINA IS OBVIOUSLY TRYING TO PREVENT NORTH KOREA FROM BECOMING A SATELLITE OF MOSCOW. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT IF KIM PROVOKED WAR, THE UNITED STATES WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE INVOLVED IN VIEW OF THE PRESENCE OF ITS TROOPS ON THE PENINSULA AND THE EXISTENCE OF THE U.S.-ROK MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY. IN THAT CASE CHINA WOULD ALSO BE OBLIGED TO INVOLVE ITSELF ON THE SIDE OF THE NORTH EVEN AT THE EXPENSE OF ITS EFFORT TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES. SINCE THEIR INTERESTS WOULD BE JEOPARDIZED BY WAR, PARK FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND THE PRC'S CURRENT ATTITUDES.

Q) DR. BRZEZINSKI EXPRESSED AGREEMENT WITH PRESIDENT PARK'S STATEMENT. HE NOTED THE IMPORTANCE FROM THE SOVIET STANDPOINT OF PREVENTING A STRATEGIC RAPPROCHEMENT BETWEEN THE U.S. AND PEKING. WAR IN KOREA COULD PROVIDE IMPEDIMENTS TO SUCH A RAPPROCHEMENT, AND THE SOVIETS MIGHT EVEN ENCOURAGE THIS, AND THE CHINESE ARE AWARE OF SUCH POSSIBILITIES. DR. BRZEZINSKI TOLD PARK THAT SOME OF THE THINGS HE PASSED ON PRIVATELY MIGHT CONSTITUTE WAYS OF ASSURING THAT THERE WILL NOT BE A WAR OR THAT THE CHINESE WOULD NOT FAVOR SUCH A WAR BECAUSE IT WOULD BE A VIOLATION OF UNDERSTANDINGS WITH PYONGYANG. HE ADDED THAT WE ARE DEALING WITH VERY FUNDAMENTAL FACTORS BEARING ON THE LARGER STRATEGIC DIMENSION OF U.S. RELATIONS WITH THE PRC. THESE ARE SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANT BEARING U.S.-PRC RELATIONS HAVE ON SOVIET STRATEGIC AND CONVENTIONAL FORCES AND THE SOVIET'S ABILITY POLITICALLY TO EXPLOIT THEIR GROWING MILITARY STRENGTH IN THE CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES IN AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST.

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MESSAGE (CONTINUED):

R) PRESIDENT PARK RECOGNIZED THE COMPLEXITY OF THE SITUATION, AND OF THE DIFFICULTIES OF FATHOMING CHINA'S REAL INTENTIONS.

S) DR. BRZEZINSKI COMMENTED THAT THIS ENHANCED THE IMPORTANCE OF STICKING TO FUNDAMENTALS. ONE SUCH FUNDAMENTAL, HE SAID, IS THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESERVING CLOSE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE U.S. AND SOUTH KOREA. A SECOND IS THAT THE U.S. WILL NOT DEAL WITH NORTH KOREA BEHIND THE BACKS OF THE ROK. HE SAID THAT HE TOLD THE ROMANIANS WHEN CEAUSESCU WAS IN WASHINGTON THAT THEY SHOULD MIND THEIR OWN BUSINESS AND WORRY ABOUT TRANSYLVANIA RATHER THAN ATTEMPTING TO FIGURE OUT WAYS TO SOLVE OTHER WORLD PROBLEMS FARTHER AFIELD. A THIRD IS THAT IT IS IN SOUTH KOREA'S INTEREST AS WELL AS AMERICA'S THAT U.S.-CHINESE STRATEGIC RELATIONS EXPAND. A FOURTH IS THAT, TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, SOUTH KOREA SHOULD CONTINUE COMMUNICATING A WILLINGNESS TO TALK WITH NORTH KOREA, PROVIDED SUCH TALKS ARE ON THE BASIS OF EQUALITY. THIS LEAVES IT TO THE NORTH TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR OWN INTRANSIGENCE OR MODIFY ITS POSITION. THESE FUNDAMENTALS, DR. BRZEZINSKI SAID,

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MESSAGE ANNOTATIONS:

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TO AMEMBASSY SEOUL IMMEDIATE 0833

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S E C R E T FINAL SECTION OF S STATE 139338/3

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PROVIDE A STRONG BASIS FOR OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS, AND THEY MAKE IT LESS NECESSARY TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THE CHINESE REALLY HAVE IN MIND. IN ANY CASE, THE CHINESE HAVE THEIR OWN PROBLEMS AND COMPLICATIONS. WE CAN LOOK, HE SAID, TO THE FUTURE WITH CONFIDENCE IF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA SUSTAINS ITS REMARKABLE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROGRESS AND STRENGTHENS ITS ARMED FORCES, THUS ENABLING IT TO HANDLE ANY SITUATION IN THE FACE OF A NORTH KOREA WHICH HAS HALF OF ITS POPULATION AND LESS THAN HALF OF ITS GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT.

T) PRESIDENT PARK OBSERVED THAT TITO AND CEAUCESCU HAD VISITED THE UNITED STATES AND ACTED AS IF THEY WERE GOING IN AN INTERMEDIARY ROLE. HE ASKED WHETHER THEY ACTED ON THEIR OWN OR BECAUSE THEY WERE ASKED BY THE NORTH KOREANS.

U) DR. BRZEZINSKI DESCRIBED HIS IMPRESSION THAT BOTH TITO AND CEAUCESCU THINK THAT YUGOSLAVIA AND ROMANIA ARE TOO SMALL FOR THEM AND AS A CONSEQUENCE BOTH ARE LOOKING FOR GLOBAL PROBLEMS TO SOLVE. TITO, HE SAID, WAS PERHAPS MORE INCLINED TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE, SINCE HE SEES HIMSELF AS AN ELDER STATESMAN DISPENSING ADVICE TO THE INEXPERIENCED JUNIOR LEADERS. CEAUCESCU GAVE MORE THE APPEARANCE OF ONE WHO WAS PASSING MESSAGES. IN BOTH CASES, HE SAID, WE THANKED THEM AND TOLD THEM THAT WE HAD NO INTENTION TO TALK DIRECTLY WITH NORTH KOREA. BUT IF BOTH SOUTH AND NORTH KOREA WERE INTERESTED IN TALKS, AND IF OUR FRIENDS IN SOUTH KOREA WANTED US INVOLVED, WE WERE PREPARED TO SUPPORT TRIPARTITE TALKS. HE INFORMED PARK THAT BOTH CEAUCESCU AND TITO WERE DISAPPOINTED WITH OUR ANSWER, BUT

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EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT BOTH WOULD FIND OTHER PROBLEMS TO TRY TO SOLVE.

V) PRESIDENT PARK COMMENTED THAT NORTH KOREA MUST HAVE SHOWN SOME RESPONSE TO THE U.S. PROPOSAL FOR TRIPARTITE TALKS WHEN PREMIER HUA WAS IN PYONGYANG, AND ASKED WHETHER IN HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CHINESE HE HEARD ANY INDICATIONS OF THEIR ANSWER.

W) DR. BRZEZINSKI DENIED THAT WE HAD MADE ANY PROPOSAL.

X) PRESIDENT PARK ASKED WHOSE PROPOSAL IT WAS.

Y) DR. BRZEZINSKI SAID HE HAD ALREADY GIVEN PARK A DETAILED EXPLANATION OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THE YUGOSLAVS MADE A PROPOSAL FOR TRIPARTITE DISCUSSIONS.

Z) PRESIDENT PARK SAID IT WAS HIS IMPRESSION THAT THE UNITED STATES WANTED SUCH TALKS.

AA) DR. BRZEZINSKI OBSERVED THAT TITO MADE THE PROPOSAL, AND THE U.S. INDICATED IT WOULD EXPLORE IT IF THE PARTIES WERE INTERESTED.

BB) DR. BRZEZINSKI ASKED THE PRESIDENT WHETHER SOUTH KOREA FAVORS OR OPPOSES SUCH TALKS.

CC) PRESIDENT PARK INDICATED IN ALL FRANKNESS THAT THE ROKG WAS NOT VERY MUCH INTERESTED, BECAUSE NORTH KOREANS SAY THEY WILL NOT DEAL WITH THE PRESENT ROK REGIME, AND UNTIL AND UNLESS NORTH KOREA RECOGNIZES THE ROKG AS A FULL PARTNER, IT IS NOT INTERESTED IN SUCH TALKS. HE DESCRIBED NORTH KOREA'S OBJECTIVE IN SEEKING A DIALOGUE AT THIS TIME AS A DISCUSSION LIKE THE ONE WHICH OCCURRED BETWEEN HANOI AND THE UNITED STATES AT THE END OF THE VIETNAMESE WAR. IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, HE SAID, THE ROK WOULD LOOK SIMPLY LIKE A BRIDESMAID WITH THE UNITED STATES AND NORTH KOREA SERVING AS THE BRIDE AND THE GROOM.

DD) DR. BRZEZINSKI NOTED THAT WHEN THE ROMANIANS BROUGHT UP THE TALKS AND MENTIONED NORTH KOREA'S UNWILLINGNESS TO DEAL WITH THE ROKG, HE TOLD THEM IT WAS OUTRAGEDOUS FOR THE ROMANIANS TO COME TO THE U.S. FOR SUPPORT IN PROTECTING THEIR INDEPENDENCE AND AT THE SAME TIME TO MAKE STATEMENTS CONCERNING FAR EASTERN SITUATIONS THAT WOULD OBJECTIVELY

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MESSAGE (CONTINUED) :

HELP THE SOVIET UNION. HE AGREED WITH PRESIDENT PARK'S ASSESSMENT OF NORTH KOREA'S MOTIVES, AND STATED THAT THE U.S. POSITION IS CLEAR. QUOTE WE WILL CONSIDER TRIPARTITE TALKS ONLY IF YOU FAVOR THEM. IF YOU DON'T WANT SUCH TALKS,

WE HAVE NO REASON TO PROMOTE THEM. THE ONLY POSSIBLE UTILITY OF SUCH TALKS WOULD BE IF THEY WERE HELD ON THE BASIS OF COMPLETE EQUALITY THUS INCREASING INTERNATIONAL ACCEPTANCE OF CROSS RECOGNITION AND MAKING IT HARDER FOR THE USSR OR ANYONE ELSE TO PUSH FOR A CONFLICT IN THE KOREAN PENINSULA WITH THE POSSIBLE AIM OF COMPLICATING THE TASK OF ACHIEVING A STRATEGIC RAPPROCHEMENT BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND CHINA. IN THE FUTURE WE WILL BE GUIDED IN OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE TRIPARTITE TALKS BY YOUR VIEWS. UNQUOTE END TEXT

3. WE WILL BE SENDING A SHORT SEPARATE REPORT ON TWO ADDITIONAL ITEMS DISCUSSED DURING THE LUNCHEON. VANCE

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