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THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESS CONFERENCE
OF

PHILIP C. HABIB
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR
EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS

CHOSUN HOTEL

5:45 P.M. (South Korea Time)

MR. NESSEN: Somebody should be passing among you right now with the communique, it is for immediate release.

Our briefer today who, first of all will give you a briefing on the meeting today; and, secondly, will answer questions about that and the communique, is Philip Habib, the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, formerly the American Ambassador in Korea.

Phil has got to go to this reception tonight and I am going to ask you to let Phil off after about 15 minutes so he can go get dressed and get to the reception.

Phil.

MR. HABIB: I thought before I took questions I might just give you a brief rundown.

First of all, as was quite apparent on the way in, the tremendous crowd that greeted the President was a remarkable event.

The extraordinary warmth and friendliness of the crowd came through so visibly and so vibrantly.

Looking back over the long relationship that the United States has had with the Republic of Korea and the Korean people, that reception, that warmth and that friendliness reflected not only the periods of difficulties that have existed in the past in our actions and our activities in this country, but we believe they also reflect the genuine and heartwarming feeling that the Korean people hold not only for the President but for all Americans as a result of the contributions in the past and the associations in the past.

Now, at the meeting today, I think you have all had a chance by now to observe the items listed in the communique.

You just got it? Well, I would suggest that you read the communique as the basis of an analysis or an understanding of the discussion that went on.

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The discussion centered basically and principally in an exchange of views on the security situation and on the relations between Korea and the United States with regard to that security situation.

They also touched upon the international economic situation and in particular, relevance of the international economic situation to Korea's own problems and interests. There was free exchange between the two Presidents with respect to the questions of peace, security and stability on the Korean Peninsula.

President Park reviewed for President Ford the most recent activities along the demilitarized zone and described for him the tunnel which has been discovered in that area and expressed his concern with regard to that activity on the part of the North Koreans.

President Park expressed his hope that the United States would pursue the modernization program for the Armed Forces of Korea. He also expressed the desire of his government for the maintenance of the United States forces in Korea.

President Ford reaffirmed the strong bonds of friendship and cooperation which we have toward Korea. He affirmed that we would seek to fulfill the military modernization program while pointing out that of course that required the support and assistance of funds from the Congress.

President Ford also stated there was no intention to withdraw United States forces from the Korean Peninsula, to reduce U.S. forces in the Korean Peninsula.

With respect to the international economic situation, the exchange of views produced the general agreement on the requirement for particular cooperation with regard to such things as the international oil situation -- and that is called the energy situation generally -- which is, of course, as much of a problem here as it has been elsewhere.

I think that generally speaking, the two hours of solid conversation which was followed by a shorter period of the two Presidents meeting alone encompassed within it all of the items, all of the elements, presented to you in the joint communique which was approved at the end of the meeting and then released to you shortly thereafter.

Q Mr. Secretary, was there any discussion of the possibility of the Soviet Union and China recognizing South Korea and in return we would recognize North Korea?

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MR. HABIB: There was no specific discussion in that exact term. What we did make clear -- what the President did state -- was that as far as the United States was concerned, we believe that before we would make any moves toward North Korea that there should be equivalency in treatment of South Korea by the major Communist powers.

Q Mr. Habib, was there any mention at all by President Ford of the domestic situation in South Korea?

MR. HABIB: The subject did come up.

Q What was the question?

MR. HABIB: Do you want to repeat the question?

Q Was there any discussion between the Presidents about the domestic political situation?

MR. HABIB: The question is, was there any discussion between the Presidents about the domestic political situation in Korea; is that correct?

Q That is correct.

MR. HABIB: The answer is the subject did come up but I don't think it is appropriate for me to discuss in detail anything that was said.

Q Who brought it up? Which of the two parties brought it up?

MR. HABIB: I am just trying to recall precisely. Basically, the subject was discussed in part by, I think, both of them. I think it is fair to say by both of them.

Q A follow-up question, please.

MR. HABIB: Yes, go ahead.

Q Did the subject come up in the context of Congressional approval of money necessary to fulfill Korea's desire to upgrade its military?

MR. HABIB: The subject came up as part of a general discussion between the two Presidents.

Q How long did it take --

MR. HABIB: Let me finish, Don. I don't think it would be appropriate for me to discuss or give you the details of such a discussion.

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As you know, and as has been stated prior to our arrival here, this question of the appropriate mix of our security situation and these other matters has been discussed with you by the Secretary, himself, on a number of occasions.

It is quite clear that when one looks at these things, one determines what balance occupies your intention and your concern.

Now, our fundamental concern and attention has been devoted to the problems of peace and stability on the Peninsula. And that is the way the general conversation went.

Now, beyond that, in terms of what was discussed, when it came up, how it came up, I am not prepared to go into those details and I don't think you would think it appropriate if I did. Anyway, I don't think it is appropriate.

Q What exactly did they discuss?

MR. HABIB: I am not prepared to go into the discussion.

Q What exactly did the communique deal with?

MR. HABIB: The communique fundamentally deals with the security in foreign policy interests that preoccupy the two governments. That is the answer to your question. I guess the answer is that the communique deals only with the security and foreign policy objectives of our relations.

Q Mr. Secretary, was yesterday's incident at the American Embassy discussed at all?

MR. HABIB: That did not come up at all. No, that did not come up.

Don.

Q Did the President express to President Park any concern or position of the United States Government with respect to individual rights or human rights in Korea and did he ask that people who are in jail be released?

MR. HABIB: What you are trying to get me to do -- and it is quite obvious I am trying not to do -- it is a little game we can play as much as you want. What you are trying, obviously, to get me to do is comment on the details of the discussion of that particular subject.

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Very frankly, I don't think it is appropriate for me to discuss the details of that discussion. You think it is appropriate, you would like me to, but I am not going to and I think the details of that discussion will just have to be left out of this briefing. I know that doesn't satisfy you, Don, but on the other hand, I have a feeling that you didn't really expect much more.

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Q Mr. Secretary, were there other topics as well that were discussed that you are not telling us about, or is this the only one?

MR. HABIB: No. You mean in terms of details? No. There are other things that I am not discussing in terms of details, yes, quite obviously -- there are a number of items. For example, there was a discussion of the relationship of security on the Korean Peninsula and the general situation in the area as a whole in which there was some discussion of various relationships of the security of Korea and the various countries surrounding it.

There was a discussion with respect to our support for the dialogue with the North. There were many things discussed in the security and military fields and the foreign policy field which I would not think appropriate to discuss in great detail.

Now the general principles that are involved in those matters I have mentioned, and they are generally set out in the communique.

Q Mr. Secretary, you seem to be willing to talk about general principles.

MR. HABIB: That is correct.

Q What is the general principle of our discussing the internal political situation in South Korea, what general principle do we want upheld here?

MR. HABIB: Considering the attention that has been paid to the subject both at home and in the press, and is quite obvious, here today, it is quite simple to understand why the subject could have arisen in the discussion.

Now beyond that, I don't know of any more rational explanation.

Q Mr. Secretary, could we perhaps put the question to you this way --

MR. HABIB: You can put the question -- let me see if I can put the answer in a way to satisfy you better.

Q Did the President in any way gently or firmly indicate to President Park that the United States Congress might not be willing to continue the current level of military-economic aid to South Korea if the political oppression in this country continues?

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MR. HABIB: That is not the kind of question -- what you are asking me to do is describe to you what I said. A little while ago I would not describe the nature of the details of the conversation.

Let's take a lady for a change.

Q Can you say whether their discussion of this particular problem moved off dead center? Was there understanding?

MR. HABIB: I should presume almost any discussion between Presidents never stays on dead center. I don't know what you mean by moving off dead center. If you mean was there a discussion which produces an agreement, that is not the sort of subject one discusses in the same manner one discusses matters of security and foreign policy between sovereign nations.

Q Mr. Secretary, quite apart from any discussion that was held today, is the President concerned about the jailing of political dissidents?

MR. HABIB: I wouldn't want to answer that question in this kind of a context. It is quite obvious that Mr. Nessen handles those kinds of questions. I am here to brief you on what I can with respect to the meetings today. The broader part of what the President believes or doesn't believe, I believe is more appropriately handled by Mr. Nessen. And I'll let you read that either way.

Q Mr. Secretary, did you discuss any alternative system that might replace the United Nations command in case the United Nations General Assembly decided to dissolve the U.N. seat?

MR. HABIB: The question was, was there any alternative system besides that of the United Nations command which was discussed, particularly with respect to the security on the Korean Peninsula.

As you know, the General Assembly of the United Nations has before it at the present time the draft resolution which was introduced by the United States and other member countries, and the United States hopes that the General Assembly would base its consideration of the Korean question as stated in the communique on the recognition of the importance of security arrangements.

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Now the security arrangements which have preserved the peace on the Korean Peninsula for such a long time cannot be disregarded and in any consideration of this question at the United Nations, it should be expected that the security arrangements that have preserved the peace will be preserved so that the peace can continue to be sustained.

Q Mr. Secretary, I wonder if I could try that question again.

MR. HABIB: Yes, try it again. You mean which one -- the political one or this one?

Q I am trying to give you a chance to say yes or no.

MR. HABIB: That is a bad question when you start that way.

Q After the President had finished his conversations with President Park about the political circumstances--the domestic political situation--did he feel satisfied --

MR. HABIB: I didn't say there was a conversation about it. I said the subject came up.

Q It must have come up. Was he satisfied by the conversation?

MR. HABIB: I would expect the answer is yes.

Q Mr. Habib, it seems to me you are not going as far as Secretary of State Kissinger went when he talked to reporters on the plane from Kyoto this morning.

MR. HABIB: I didn't get the same kind of questions.

Q According to the pool report -- I don't have it in front of me, but my recollection is that the President had expressed his concern about the domestic political situation and explained the trouble the domestic situation has been causing this country.

MR. HABIB: I don't think that is what the Secretary said. I heard it --I only heard it while I was standing alongside, but whatever the pool report would record as the Secretary's statement, I would stand on. You can be sure whatever he said was the way things went.

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Q Mr. Secretary, could you tell us if the decision for Secretary Kissinger not to brief today was meant in any way to reflect dissatisfaction toward the South Koreans?

MR. HABIB: No, I think in this case--in the first place the meeting ran late and the Secretary has other engagements. In the second place, I think he felt my own personal knowledge of the people in the situation here might be useful to you.

I don't think necessarily that would be always what you want but, if there were to be any other questions which would require some of that personal knowledge, I would be prepared to take any more that you may have.

Q Mr. Secretary, a factual question. How much money will the United States have to spend in order to complete the modernization of the Korean Army and over how long a period?

MR. HABIB: It depends on how we come out of this fiscal year's appropriations. As you know, the act has not been fully passed by the Congress. If the Congress were to provide the funds requested by the Administration, the completion of the program in full would still require -- depending on pricing and that sort of thing -- the program is only a program--it would run somewhere in the neighborhood of \$400 to \$500 million altogether.

But it depends on this year's appropriations and ongoing appropriations.

What President Ford said was that we would make every effort to meet the modernization program. He intended to meet the military modernization program, but, in the course of making that statement, he pointed out that this, of course, requires Congressional action.

I will take one more question.

Q Mr. Secretary, you may be aware that five American missionaries, representing a total of 82, have asked to see some member of the Presidential party with respect to their concern about the situation in Korea. Are they going to see somebody? If so, who and when?

MR. HABIB: I don't have an answer for you right now, Don, but we will try to give you an answer later through Ron, all right?

Q Please do.

MR. HABIB: Thank you very much.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

END (AT 6:04 P.M. South Korea Time)