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MEMORANDUM

4699

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

~~SECRET~~ GDSACTION

August 18, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR WILLIAM G. HYLAND

FROM: WILLIAM GLEYSTEN *WJ*

SUBJECT: WSAG Meeting on Korean Incident

Two American Army officers serving in the U. N. Command were killed in an unprovoked assault by North Korean guards today within the joint security area at Pamunjom. Four other U. S. soldiers and four ROK Army personnel were injured. The killings were the first deaths ever in the joint security area, site of the joint Armistice Command meetings.

North Korean Intentions

The North Korean personnel involved presumably had received authorization for an attack on a UNC target of opportunity within the joint security area. The assault follows the issuance on August 5 of a long North Korean Government memorandum and statement charging that the U. S. had "completed preparations for a new war" and "is going into the stage of directly provoking war." Only hours before release of the statement, there was a shooting incident in the DMZ between North and South Korean forces.

Pyongyang probably timed its attack on the American personnel to underscore its charge of increased tension on the Korean Peninsula. Conceivably the North Koreans hoped that U. S. forces would over-react with firearms creating a situation which would have a favorable impact in the current Non-Aligned Conference and in the forthcoming U. N. General Assembly deliberations. It is also likely that Pyongyang calculates that an aura of heightened tension will surface the Korean issue in the American election campaign.

Over the last several months, we have been concerned that Pyongyang could be contemplating a strategy of provocations and harrassment. This concern was based upon:

-- Naval and air deployments the past year/^{that} have significantly strengthened the North's capability for rapid action in and along the demilitarized zone. Pyongyang is also in a better position to support probes in the vicinity of the Northwest Islands or to respond belligerently to incidents at sea as well as in the DMZ.

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E.O. 12958 (as amended) SEC 3.3

NSC Memo, 3/30/76, State Dept. Guidelines

By *WJ* NARA, Date *1/21/11*~~SECRET~~ GDS

-- North Korea's likely assessment of the lessons of Indochina and the Middle East.

-- The U. S. election campaign and our feeling that Pyongyang would be tempted to produce a shock which would bring the issue of U. S. involvement in Korea to a head within the U. S.

-- South Korea's continuing rapid economic development and military modernization which has probably persuaded the North that time is not on its side.

-- Pyongyang's likely estimate that it was approaching the peak of its political and diplomatic gains vis-a-vis the South.

Future North Korean Moves

It could be that Pyongyang intends to take only this one-shot swipe at the U. S. and will not follow up with other provocative actions.

If a primary North Korean intention, however, is to underscore for the American public the risk and dangers of a continued U. S. military presence in Korea, Pyongyang might seek to sustain an atmosphere of crisis. We must, therefore, consider the possibility that the current incident will be followed by others or even that it is the opening shot in a strategy of harrassment and limited military action.

Danger Areas

If North Korea does intend to pursue a policy of harrassment and limited military probes, the areas or targets of possible North Korean action are:

- The entire DMZ area, including the joint security zone, and the U. S. company deployed within the DMZ.
- The Northwest Islands.
- Naval and fishing activities.
- Reconnaissance and intelligence operations.

Precautions

-- Issue warnings to U. S. and UNC commanders in the field to be on the alert for further provocations and possibly limited military actions by the North. U. S. commanders should review operations and deployments



for vulnerabilities and take necessary action to avoid carelessness in operations.

-- Instruct commanders to take necessary actions to guard against incidents and dangerous exposure of U. S. military elements during military exercises such as the forthcoming air defense exercise, COPE JADE DELTA.

-- Strengthen coordination and control measures with the ROK.

Public and Diplomatic Actions

-- Issue strong public protest. Both the State Department and the White House have issued statements condemning the North Korean action and warning that North Korea will bear the responsibility for the consequences.

-- Encourage Congressional statements of condemnation and consider seeking Congressional resolution reasserting U. S. determination to maintain peace in the Korean Peninsula.

-- Inform the Chinese of our strong reaction and the dangerous situation which North Korea appears to be creating. Consider passing similar message to the Soviet Union.

-- Consult with the Japanese as soon as possible on the incident and on any U. S. counter-measures.

-- Inform U. N. Security Council.

-- Seek condemnation of North Korea from friendly governments.

-- Exploit the incident to underscore the need to continue the Armistice arrangements.

U. S. Counter-Measures

-- Direct limited military action (an air strike against a SAM site, barracks or other military target, seizure of a North Korean military vessel, etc.). This would involve a high risk of provoking further North Korean moves leading to an increase in basic tensions and danger of war in Korea. The moves might well be considered an over-reaction in many U. S. and foreign circles, allowing North Korea to escape the onus for its action.



MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

4705 X

~~SECRET~~

August 25, 1976

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MEMORANDUM FOR:

BRENT SCOWCROFT

FROM:

Jeanne W. Davis *JD*

SUBJECT:

fn Minutes of WSAG Meeting
held August 18, 1976

Attached are the minutes of the Washington Special Actions Group meeting held August 18, 1976 to discuss Korea.

Attachments

cc: William G. Hyland
William Gleysteen

~~SECRET~~/XGDS (3)

XGDS of E. O. 11652 by authority
of Brent Scowcroft; Exemption
Category 5 (B) (3))

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E.O. 12958 (as amended) SEC 3.3
NSC Memo, 3/30/06, State Dept. Guidelines
By *WJ* NARA, Date *1/21/11*



NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
Presidential Libraries Withdrawal Sheet

WITHDRAWAL ID 033321

REASON FOR WITHDRAWAL ÇNational security restriction

TYPE OF MATERIAL ÇMemorandum of Conversation

TITLE Washington Special Actions Group Meeting

DESCRIPTION Re The North Korean Tree Incident

CREATION DATE 08/18/1976

VOLUME 11 pages

COLLECTION/SERIES/FOLDER ID . 033700439

COLLECTION TITLE NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER. NSC EAST
ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS STAFF FILES

BOX NUMBER 27

FOLDER TITLE Washington Special Actions Group Meeting, August 18, 1976 (Korean Incident)

DATE WITHDRAWN 04/20/2011

WITHDRAWING ARCHIVIST TMH

~~SECRET~~

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18 August 1976

DDCI BRIEFING FOR
18 AUGUST WSAG MEETING

NORTH KOREA

- I. We are virtually certain that the violent incident in the Joint Security Area this morning was a deliberate provocation. We believe it was primarily intended to agitate American public opinion over the issue of our troops in Korea in the context of the US election campaign.
- II. Since early this spring, North Korean propaganda has charged almost daily that the US is introducing new weapons into the South, conducting provocative military exercises, and keeping South Korean armed forces on a war footing.
 - Pyongyang has warned that these developments have created a "grave situation" in which war may break out at any time.
 - On August 5 -- only a few hours after an exchange of fire between ROK and North Korean troops on the DMZ -- North Korea, in an unusually high level statement, alleged that

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RAC NLF-NSC-EA-PA-27-10-3-4 9/23/03

hr NLF DATE 11/21/09

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the US and South Korea have now "completed" war preparations. The statement was the first issued at this level since 1969 that was directed specifically at US actions in the South.

III. North Korea's efforts have most recently been focused on the Non-Aligned Conference in Colombo, now drawing to a close.

-- Their efforts in Colombo, in turn, were intended to affect favorably their prospects in the UN General Assembly debate. A resolution has now been introduced that once again calls for American withdrawal from Korea.

IV. While the North Koreans have made gains in the international forum, their propaganda efforts have won them little or no return in the American political forum. They may now be raising the ante in hopes of stimulating American opposition to a continued US troop presence. This morning's incident seemed deliberately intended to produce American casualties.

- 2 -

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- The Joint Security Area is one of the very few places where North Koreans have direct, continuing contact with US military personnel.
- In June, there were several similar incidents in which US forces in the Joint Security Area were harassed by North Korean personnel. No casualties resulted, however.
- According to the account of today's incident issued in Seoul, a North Korean officer at the scene was heard to tell his troops to kill the UNC (i.e., US) personnel.
- A North Korean radiobroadcast shortly after the incident occurred described it as a US provocation that forced North Korean security personnel to take defensive measures. The broadcast warned that future incidents of US aggression would be met in this fashion, but otherwise signaled no major change in Pyongyang's policy.

V. North Korea's next moves will undoubtedly be conditioned by the American reaction.

- Should the response to this probe lead them to believe that they can play effectively on American sensitivities by further con-



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trolled acts of violence, we would expect them to pursue this course.

VI. But we believe that their principal immediate objective is to improve upon their 1975 success in the General Assembly. Accordingly, we believe that they are extremely unlikely to embark upon a course that would run the risk of major US reprisals or portraying North Korea as significantly raising the threat of instability on the peninsula.

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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By *MA* NARA, Date *1/21/11*



NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
Presidential Libraries Withdrawal Sheet

WITHDRAWAL ID 033322

REASON FOR WITHDRAWAL ÇNational security restriction

TYPE OF MATERIAL ÇMemorandum of Conversation

TITLE Washington Special Actions Group
DESCRIPTION Re The North Korean Tree Incident,
Duplicate

CREATION DATE 08/18/1976

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AUTHORITY ~~same as PA 11E-NSC EA-PA-27-10-3-4~~ 9/22/03

BY WJ DATE 1/21/11



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