

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with President Roh Tae-Woo of Korea

PARTICIPANTS: Brent Scowcroft
Nancy Bearg Dyke (notetaker)

President Roh Tae-Woo
Kim Chong-Whi
Ambassador Hyun
Korean Interpreter

DATE, TIME September 21, 1992, 3:15 - 3:45pm EST
AND PLACE: The Waldorf-Astoria, New York City

The meeting began with warm greetings back and forth.

President Roh: I understand about the campaign and that the President was not able to meet with me. (Ø)

Brent Scowcroft: I want to convey the President's deep regrets that he is unable to meet with you. (U)

President Roh: I received the President's personal message before I left Seoul. (U)

Brent Scowcroft: He is in a tough fight for reelection. He is optimistic about the outcome but is spending every minute on the campaign. (U)

President Roh: Sitting in Seoul, I have been rooting for President Bush's reelection. But, as seems to be the case at the end of the 20th century, even when leaders do a good job, they are faced with difficulty at home. But I have confidence in President Bush. (Ø)

Brent Scowcroft: Yes, the mood is strange and difficult for incumbents. (Ø)

President Roh: When I was leaving for New York, Don Gregg came to the airport, and I asked him if I will bring good luck to the President. He said yes, he has good feelings about this. I hope my visit to the U.S. will provide an occasion to turn the tide. I am speaking to an Asia Society dinner with a large attendance. I would like to lend my support indirectly. (Ø)

Brent Scowcroft: Thank you. It is an influential group, and we will take your visit as a good omen. (Ø)

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President Roh: As is the case everywhere, when contending parties speak, people do not listen. But often when an outsider speaks, they listen. I will bring this message for Americans: Recover your self confidence. You have led the world out of World War II and the Cold War and saved the human race. This is the achievement of the Reagan-Bush team. (Ø)

Brent Scowcroft: True, and someone like you can put it in perspective. History will judge, but right now it doesn't seem to count for much. (Ø)

President Roh: The phenomenon is ubiquitous in Korea and elsewhere. They see the trees well but not the bush. I am referring to George Bush! (Ø)

Brent Scowcroft: That is a good 15X point. (U)

You should be very proud of your achievements. The trip you are about to take to China is a historical development and the President wanted me to congratulate you on your success. (U)

President Roh: The normalization of the Korea-China relationship owes a great deal to President Bush. I will visit Beijing on the 27th. I invite your comments and any message from President Bush. (Ø)

Brent Scowcroft: Yes, the President would like you to convey a message. Our decision to sell F-16s to Taiwan has caused concern in China. It would help if you convey your conviction that we intend no change in our policy to China. We maintain the policy the same as all these difficult years since Tienanmen Square. The President will fight for MFN and he hopes to be able to improve the U.S.-China relationship in his next term. (Ø)

President Roh: I will try my best to explain the situation to the Chinese, including the F-16s. Perhaps Beijing misunderstands, but as far as I know it is a promise made in the early 1980s and the U.S. is carrying it out. (Ø)

Brent Scowcroft: That is exactly right. We have heard the Chinese are wondering if this is a new U.S. policy. Hearing that it is not a new policy, from you -- the President's good friend and one of our closest allies -- will be useful. We would hope they would not do anything foolish in response. (Ø)

President Roh: I will be very pleased to deliver the message to China. (U)

I have a question regarding the North Korean nuclear device. We hear that some sectors in the U.S. want ROK flexibility. But we think it makes more sense to keep balance and have slight flexibility in the number of inspections (Ø)

Brent Scowcroft: The President still is concerned about the North and about its intentions, especially regarding its nuclear program. And he thinks it is important that you insist on bilateral inspections and not rely simply on IAEA. North Korea may have changed dramatically, but we should not run a risk, so the President hopes you will stay on course. (S)

President Roh: Of course, we are strictly following the principle of mutual bilateral inspections, but in the process perhaps carrots and sticks would be useful. (S)

Brent Scowcroft: I think that would be appropriate. How do you feel about the relationship? (S)

President Roh: I would not be too hopeful about the future of bilateral inspections, but the possibility has increased from before. As I understand, North Korea wants to improve relations with Japan and the U.S., but they are debating how to proceed. (S)

Brent Scowcroft: We are holding back and letting you take the lead and set the pace for improvements in relations. (S)

President Roh: Thank you very much for your comments. (U)

President Yeltsin is coming in November. I have a question about why he did not go to Japan and I welcome any comments. (S)

Brent Scowcroft: I think what happened was very strong Japanese statements before the planned visit put President Yeltsin in a difficult situation. He may have thought he could return the islands through some formula but his domestic situation did not permit it. So he cancelled rather than have a failed visit. (S)

President Roh: I agree. (U)

Brent Scowcroft: I think the fact that he wants to come to see you anyway is a sign to the Japanese that they are a little too strong in their position and that they can wait. (S)

President Roh: The overriding task before us is success in the election campaign. I want President Bush to know that a lot of people around the world want him to win. He should have confidence and courage. (S)

Brent Scowcroft: He will take great comfort in your friendship and your message. (S)

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