



MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

January 29, 1981

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MEMORANDUM FOR: RICHARD V. ALLEN  
THROUGH: CHARLES P. TYSON *CPT*  
FROM: DONALD GREGG *DG*

Attached is a two-page overview of the Chun visit, for the President's use.

From my viewpoint, preparations for the visit are going well, although as of 1100 hours today, the State briefing books were still sitting in the Secretary's office. I have read the book in draft, and it is a fine piece of work

I am preparing a short briefing folder for Mrs. Reagan's use with Mrs. Chun. This will be forwarded within the hour.

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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

INFORMATION

January 29, 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: RICHARD ALLEN  
SUBJECT: President Chun of Korea

Background

Your meeting with President Chun is an important milestone in American relations with the Republic of Korea. Chun's ability to meet with you validates and legitimizes his leadership in Korea as no other single event could. Furthermore, this meeting ushers in an era of U.S./Korean relations which appears to be less contentious than any period over the last eight or nine years.

Korea has made magnificent economic strides, but its political development has been stunted by the ever-present North Korean threat on one hand and the Koreans' boisterous approach to democracy on the other. President Park, assassinated in October 1979 after an eighteen-year rule, had clearly outlasted his mandate. Chun has quickly and forcefully moved to establish himself as Korea's leader, and in so doing has brought into being a new constitution, a new political party system, and a new sense of morality based on the rather Spartan virtues inculcated into Korea's officer corps by teachers at their military academy. Chun's Presidential style is still evolving, and he will learn a great deal from his visits with you and other U.S. leaders.

Under Chun's lead, the ROK is now spending six percent of its GNP on defense, a figure unmatched by any of our major allies. The ROK is now our twelfth largest trading partner. Last year approximately \$10 billion worth of goods were exchanged, with the balance slightly favorable to us.

Chun as a Man

President Chun is a graduate of the Korean Military Academy, as a member of the first class to go through the full, four-year program. In 1959-60, Chun came to the U.S. to receive training at the Army's Special Warfare and Infantry schools. In 1970-71 Chun fought in Vietnam, and received the U.S.

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Bronze Star for his services there. Up until a year ago, Chun's experience had been totally military. He is a great admirer of the late President Park, but carries a keen appreciation of areas in which Park's leadership was flawed.

Chun seems relatively at ease with the power he wields. He is a quick learner, and appears to be rapidly developing a deft political touch. On January 12, Chun issued an unconditional invitation to North Korea's leader, Kim Il-Sung, to visit the South. This was a shrewd and well-timed move which put North Korea on the defensive. President Park would probably not have been capable of such a spontaneous political gesture. Chun's power base in the military appears to be secure, but he now will attempt to distance himself from the military, and broaden his base of support, so that he can be judged as something more than an ex-general in civilian attire. His meeting with you is a giant step in that direction.

Implications for Asia

In broader terms, your meeting with Chun sends a powerful signal to all of Asia. Whereas President Carter's first message to Asia was his intention to reduce troop strength in Korea, your first signal to the region is that you are cognizant of the vital interests of the Free World in Asia, and that consistent American strength and support are necessary if we are to make the Pacific Basin a stable and secure area where growing prosperity can be enjoyed by all.

The Briefing Book

The State briefing book, attached below, is excellent. Its guidance and suggested talking points are sound, but it would be well to stress the following points in your meeting with Chun:

- that you have no intention of reducing American troop strength in Korea;
- that you will do all possible to help Korea get through a very difficult period of economic downturn;
- that the United States will not make any unilateral gestures toward North Korea;
- that the U.S./Korean relationship is of personal interest and importance to you.

A final point --- any personal reminiscences about your visit to Korea would be most welcome by the Koreans, either at lunch or in your closing remarks.