

To: the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

From: the Romanian Embassy in Washington, DC

Subject: US – South Korea relations

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During discussions with Comrade Petre Anghel, Third Secretary, David Blakemore, Deputy Director of the Korea Desk, and Robert Martens, Director of Regional Topics in the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, both at the US Department of State, noted:

American-South Korean relations are presently going through a tense period, whose outcomes are difficult to predict. This situation is due to pressure from the US [on the ROK] to fulfill certain objectives at a time when either the government in Seoul was unprepared to achieve, or these objectives interfered with South Korean plans for strengthening its economic and military forces.

The result has been the current state of affairs, in which bilateral relations are being tested by three very difficult and interdependent issues: US ground troop withdrawal, human rights and the current investigation led by a committee of the House of Representatives against the government in Seoul, regarding actions of corruption and influence in the decision process of Congress and the US administration.

1. American ground troop withdrawal. This foreign policy measure was announced by Jimmy Carter when he was still a candidate for President of the United States and became directive post-inauguration, when he assumed office in the White House. Although the measure was not explained in detail, following pressures from Japan and the US military, the Carter administration decided to gradually withdraw troops within a period of 4-5 years, in close consultation with the two aforementioned countries and providing adequate material and financial assistance.

In view of the withdrawal, the administration has already forwarded to Congress a funding request pending approval, in regards to selling military equipment to the South Korean government and compensating for the first troop withdrawals scheduled for 1978 – approximately 6000 combatants.

The request is structured in such a manner that the material compensation will precede the complete troop withdrawal scheduled for the most part at the end of the 4-5-year period.

Although the two representatives of the US State Department firmly stated that the first drawback will take place in 1978, they were unsure whether Congress would approve the requested funding necessary for an adequate planning of the full withdrawal. This is due to an increasingly stronger view in Congress to suspend all transfers of military equipment until Seoul decides to cooperate with Washington in resolving the aforementioned allegations and ensures it will take appropriate measures to improve human rights.

2. The human rights issue. This has become an important aspect of American-South Korean bilateral relations and is closely followed, especially by the US. Congress hearings on the issue have emphasized the connection between the attention offered by Seoul in respecting human rights, on the one hand, and the economic and military assistance from the US, on the other.

Despite the Carter administration's commitment to human rights, the directorate for political affairs of the Department of State is trying to minimize the potential negative effects as much as possible, under the justification that South Korean security and economic development, including US assistance, must not be threatened since they hold undeniable priority in maintaining Korean independence and balance on the Korean Peninsula.

3. The scandal sparked by allegations of influence against South Korean officials has not only raised questions regarding American-South Korean bilateral relations, but also led to serious pressures on the South Korean government from both Congress and the Carter administration. This has increased the tension between the two countries.

Given that numerous members of the House of Representatives are involved in the scandal, proving them guilty could negatively affect their stance towards the administration's request to continue offering assistance to Seoul.

This entire situation, as well as Seoul's economic achievements, has led to strengthening South Korea's national pride and confidence in its own abilities.

Consequently, the US State Department representatives mentioned that Seoul might decide to increasingly distance itself from the United States, if the pressures continue, although this is a very remote possibility.

Signed: Gh. Anghelescu