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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN



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State Dept. review completed

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25X1 South Korea: [President Rhee's personal direction of Korean policies and governmental operations may be weakening.]

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DAILY BRIEF

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[Redacted] Governmental decisions are reportedly being made by certain members of the Liberal party and the presidential secretariat, most of whom have been identified with the faction of the Liberal party that has advocated extreme measures to retain power.

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NO Somalia-Italy: [Somalia, the Italian-administered UN trust territory scheduled for independence next year, has recently asked Italy for \$5,600,000 worth of arms to be used for internal security. Rome has not yet reached a decision, but Italian officials have speculated they might provide funds to permit Mogadiscio to buy some equipment. Such action could lead to an aggravation of existing tensions between Ethiopia and Somalia. Each state fears territorial expansion on the part of the other; arms assistance to Somalia would probably prompt Ethiopia to seek more arms aid.]

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Syngman Rhee's Control Over Government Seen Weakening

[President Rhee's personal direction of Korean policies and governmental operations may be weakening. Since the latter part of May, Rhee has shown increasing inability to focus his attention on government problems and to grasp even the most elementary of new ideas.]

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Ambassador Dowling, in a personal meeting with Rhee on 13 July, noted that the President appeared to have difficulty focusing his attention on the problem under discussion,

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[There is some indication that leadership has been assumed by a triumvirate comprising Minister of Home Affairs Choe In-kyu, Minister of Justice Hong Chin-ki, and Minister of Finance Song In-song, and by the "hard" faction of Rhee's Liberal party. The presidential secretariat also appears to exercise considerable influence over governmental decisions by controlling what and whom the President sees. The most influential member of the secretariat--Pak Chan-il--is reported to be more anti-Japanese than Rhee.]

[If knowledge of President Rhee's apparently failing mental powers becomes widely known, confidence in the government may decline, and South Korea could face a protracted period of instability prior to the presidential election next year. Moreover, those persons reported to be exercising leadership have demonstrated in the past their willingness to use drastic measures to ensure their retention of power. The lack of any constitutional provision for the removal of an incapacitated president would provide them with justification for blocking the succession to the presidency of opposition Vice President Chang Myon.]

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Somali Arms Quest May Heighten Tensions With Ethiopia

[Somalia's recent request to Italy for \$5,600,000 worth of arms and equipment may aggravate tensions between Somalia and neighboring Ethiopia. These were intensified earlier this month when the Somali prime minister publicly accused Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie of seeking during his current trip abroad international support for a policy aimed against Somalia's independence and toward the eventual absorption of Somalia by Ethiopia. This is violently opposed by Somali nationalists, who hope instead to bring about the union in one state of the approximately 2,500,000 ethnic Somalis who are now divided among five separate political jurisdictions, including Ethiopia.]

[While the materiel sought by the Somalis is allegedly for internal security purposes only, the list provided the Italians includes such items as light tanks or scout cars, mortars, and bazookas intended for Somali border guards along the disputed and already highly volatile frontier with Ethiopia. Even if these items were omitted, however, Addis Ababa could be expected to react strongly against any significant strengthening of Somalia's present 3,500-man security force. New efforts by Ethiopia to bolster its own military establishment would probably follow and could lead ultimately to the acceptance of arms from the Soviet bloc, with which Addis Ababa has recently expanded its ties.]

[Rome has not yet reached a decision on the Somali request. However, an Italian Foreign Ministry official, who indicated on 29 July that Italy would have difficulty fulfilling it, also hinted that Rome might provide the Somalis with limited funds with which to purchase at least some of the equipment they desire from other Western suppliers. Failure to provide some satisfaction to Somali officials on the arms issue--about which they feel strongly--might prompt Mogadiscio to look to non-Western sources.]

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