

From: SMART Archive
Sent: 7/29/2014 6:30:41 AM
To: SMART Core
Subject: Scen setter for CODEL McKeon's August 7-10 Visit to the Republic of Korea

RELEASE
IN FULL

UNCLASSIFIED
SBU



NON-RESPONSIVE
PORTIONS REDACTED

MRN: 14 SEOUL 1452
Date/DTG: Jul 29, 2014 / 291029Z JUL 14
From: AMEMBASSY SEOUL
Action: SECSTATE WASHDC ROUTINE
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: OREP, PREL, PGOV, KNNP, MARR, EINT, ETRD, KPAO, KS, KN, JA, CH
Captions: SENSITIVE, CODEL
Subject: Scen setter for CODEL McKeon's August 7-10 Visit to the Republic of Korea

1. (SBU) Chairman McKeon and colleagues, Embassy Seoul warmly welcomes you to the Republic of Korea (ROK). The U.S.-ROK Alliance has evolved and expanded in the past 61 years, with the security alliance providing the foundation for a comprehensive strategic Alliance of bilateral, regional, and global scope that includes profound economic relations and people-to-people ties. The Alliance is stronger than ever despite formidable challenges, including the North Korean threat, complex internal politics, and shifting regional dynamics. Your visit will highlight the expanding global partnership between the United States and the ROK and reinforce Washington's commitment to the Asia-Pacific region.

NR

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Lahiguera, Senior
Reviewer

NR

Ferry Tragedy Deals Domestic Blow to President Park

3. (SBU) President Park has been active on the diplomatic front with a successful bilateral summit with President Obama here in April, a red carpet welcome in Beijing and a reciprocal visit by President Xi to Seoul in July, “sales diplomacy” visits to South and Southeast Asia, the strengthening of South Korea’s ties with European nations, and a speech on Korean reunification in Germany. On the domestic front, however, Park has recently struggled largely due to public perceptions that her government failed in its response to the April 16 Sewol ferry tragedy where over 300 lives—mostly high school students—were lost. Though Park’s Saenuri party was widely seen as winning in the June local elections due to conservatives rallying to “save” the president, Park’s public approval rate has further plunged following her inability to find a politically acceptable candidate to replace Prime Minister Chung Hong-won who had offered to resign over the government’s response to the ferry sinking. Recent polling had Park’s approval rating drop to an all-time low of 44 percent, with disapproval ratings topping 47 percent. The Sewol ferry incident and nomination scandals in her cabinet have been unwelcome distractions to Park’s efforts to focus on job creation and economic growth and to cooperate with a National Assembly which was largely deadlocked over an electioneering scandal during her first year in office. The upcoming July 30 National Assembly by-elections, with 15 seats in contention, will measure how much these recent developments will affect the ruling party.

NR

Page Denied

NR

Signature:

KIM

Drafted By:

SEOUL:Yee, Samuel S

Cleared By:

White, Heath H
SEOUL/EMB/POL:Choi, Sung W
SEOUL/EMB/ECON:Bowles, Ryan E
SEOUL/EMB/ECON:Steed, Matthew M
SEOUL/EMB/POL:Shoemaker, Lori A
SEOUL/EMB/POL:Tikvart, Daniel J
Byers, Brent D
SEOUL/EMB/POL:Dong, Edward K
JUSMAG-K:LCDR Henry T. Saito
DAO:COL Darrell H. Zemitis
DAO:CAPT Phil Yu

Approved By:

SEOUL/EMB/EXEC:Bassett, Leslie A

Released By:

AMEMBASSY SEOUL:Yee, Sameul S

Info:

KOREA COLLECTIVE ROUTINE

Dissemination Rule:

Archive Copy

UNCLASSIFIED
SBU

From: SMART Archive
Sent: 8/1/2014 4:14:19 AM
To: SMART Core
Subject: Scen setter for CODEL Shuster August 19 - 20 Visit to the Republic of Korea

RELEASE IN
PART NR,B6

UNCLASSIFIED
SBU



NON-RESPONSIVE
PORTIONS REDACTED

MRN: 14 SEOUL 1484
Date/DTG: Aug 01, 2014 / 010812Z AUG 14
From: AMEMBASSY SEOUL
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE ROUTINE
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: OREP, PREL, PGOV, ECON, ELTN, EWWT, ETRD, EAIR, ELAB, KPAO, KNNP, KS, KN
Captions: SENSITIVE, CODEL
Subject: Scen setter for CODEL Shuster August 19 - 20 Visit to the Republic of Korea

1. (SBU) Chairman Shuster and colleagues, Embassy Seoul warmly welcomes you to the Republic of Korea (ROK). Your visit will reinforce the U.S.-ROK alliance, which celebrated its 60th anniversary last year. Your visit will also be an opportunity to reaffirm Washington's commitment to the Asia-Pacific region and highlight the expanding global partnership between the United States and the ROK.

President Park and Domestic Politics

2. (SBU) President Park has been busy on the diplomatic front since taking office. She had a successful visit to Washington in May 2013, followed by a visit by President Obama here in April; a red carpet welcome in Beijing and a reciprocal visit by President Xi to Seoul in July; "sales diplomacy" visits to South and Southeast Asia; the strengthening of South Korea's ties with European nations; and a speech on Korean reunification in Germany. On the domestic front, however, Park has recently struggled largely due to perceptions her government failed in its response to the April 16 Sewol ferry tragedy where over 300 lives—mostly high school students—were lost. Though Park's Saenuri party was widely seen as winning in the June local elections due to conservatives rallying to "save" the president, Park's approval ratings continue to fall. Beyond Sewol, her decrease in support was a result of her inability to find a politically acceptable candidate to replace Prime Minister Chung Hong-won who had offered to resign over the government's response to the ferry sinking. Recent polling has Park's approvals at a low of 40 percent, and her disapprovals at a high of 50 percent. The Sewol incident and nomination scandal have been an unwelcome distraction to Park's efforts to focus on job creation and economic growth. For these initiatives, she must enlist the cooperation of the National Assembly, which has spent a large portion of her administration politically deadlocked over a succession of controversies and crises.

Alliance

NR

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Lahiguera, Senior
Reviewer

Page Denied

Page Denied

NR



Transportation Safety

14. (SBU) The death toll of the April 16 Sewol ferry sinking is estimated to reach 304, the majority of them a group of high school students from Ansan on a school trip. That disaster has led to a time of deep sorrow for all Koreans. Compounding the sorrow from that tragedy is the July 6, 2013 Asiana flight 214 crash at San Francisco International Airport. Of the 307 people aboard the Boeing 777, 3 died and 181 were injured, including 12 critically injured. Additionally, there was also a subway crash in May 2014 that injured 200 and a passenger train crash in July 2014 that killed 1 and injured 92. These events have led to a focus on renewed transportation safety, with President Park Geun-hye calling for a government reorganization and a national focus on safety.

NR



Signature: KIM

Drafted By: SEOUL:Steed, Matthew M
Cleared By: SEOUL/EMB/ECON:Bowles, Ryan E
SEOUL/EMB/ECON:Covert, Kevin T
SEOUL/EMB/POL:Shoemaker, Lori A
SEOUL/EMB/POL:Chan, Isabelle
SEOUL/EMB/POL:Choi, Sung W
SEOUL/ANNEX/PA:Kral, Alexei T
Maria.Galindo
Approved By: SEOUL/EMB/EXEC:Bassett, Leslie A
Released By: SEOUL:Steed, Matthew M
Info: BEIJING, AMEMBASSY ROUTINE ; SHANGHAI, AMCONSUL ROUTINE ;
HONG KONG, AMCONSUL ROUTINE

Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

B6

UNCLASSIFIED
SBU

국가안전
한국탐사저널리즘센터

From: SMART Archive
Sent: 8/4/2014 5:26:10 AM
To: SMART Core
Subject: LABOR MARKET LOOKING UP AS GOVERNMENT FACES CRITICISM

RELEASE
IN FULL

UNCLASSIFIED
SBU



NON-RESPONSIVE
PORTIONS REDACTED

MRN: 14 SEOUL 1492
Date/DTG: Aug 04, 2014 / 040924Z AUG 14
From: AMEMBASSY SEOUL
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE ROUTINE
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: ECON, ELAB, PGOV, KS
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: LABOR MARKET LOOKING UP AS GOVERNMENT FACES CRITICISM

1. (SBU) Summary: The Park Administration's focus on economic growth and push to increase the employment rate to 70 percent as part of its "474" plan has been criticized for creating low-wage, contract jobs to boost the employment rate and for sacrificing labor rights to keep labor costs low. In July 7-17 meetings, labor activists said the administration has neglected labor issues. However, fallout from the Sewol ferry sinking, and this summer's wage negotiations point toward an improved environment for labor interests. End summary.

NR

Opportunities to Advance Labor Interests

4. (SBU) The Sewol sinking has highlighted occupational safety conditions and the lack of regulatory oversight in Korea and trade unions have taken advantage of the opportunity to advocate for better working conditions. FKTU's Jang noted that

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Lahiguera, Senior
Reviewer

the captain and crew of the Sewol were short term contract workers and said that their irregular status contributed to the accident. He cited in particular their low commitment, hostile working conditions, and lack of training. Unions have been able to seize on this narrative and have joined the call for the government to reform its safety and employment regulations, including an increase in regular labor positions.



NR

7. (SBU) Comment: Despite their pointed and public criticism of the government, Korea’s labor unions understand that the current environment presents opportunities for improvements in labor conditions and regulations, particularly following the Sewol tragedy. Together with the decisions by GM Korea and Ssangyong to change their wage structure, there could be positive momentum for changes in labor regulations, even as the Park Administration seems to focus more on the quantity than quality of jobs in the Korean economy.

Signature:	KIM
<hr/>	
Drafted By:	SEOUL:Kim, Aimee
Cleared By:	SEOUL/EMB/POL:Chan, Isabelle
Approved By:	SEOUL/EMB/ECON:Covert, Kevin T
Released By:	SEOUL:Bowles, Ryan E
Info:	KOREA COLLECTIVE ROUTINE
<hr/>	
Dissemination Rule:	Archive Copy

UNCLASSIFIED
SBU

From: SMART Archive
Sent: 8/12/2014 3:39:42 AM
To: svcSMARTHBTSP0P1
Subject: Seoul Daily for Tuesday, August 12, 2014

RELEASE IN
FULL

SECRET
Sensitive

NON-RESPONSIVE
PORTIONS REDACTED

MRN: 14 MDA 6815
Date/DTG: Aug 12, 2014 / 120740Z AUG 14
From: Bassett, Leslie A
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: ECON, ETRD, KS, PGOV, PREL, MOPS, MARR
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: Seoul Daily for Tuesday, August 12, 2014

NR

(SBU) NPAD Pressed to Renegotiate Terms of Sewol Bill Over Mounting Criticism: Acting NPAD Chief Park Young-sun is seeking additional talks with the ruling NFP regarding the special bill on the Sewol ferry sinking due to mounting disapproval from some of her party's lawmakers and the victims' families, who

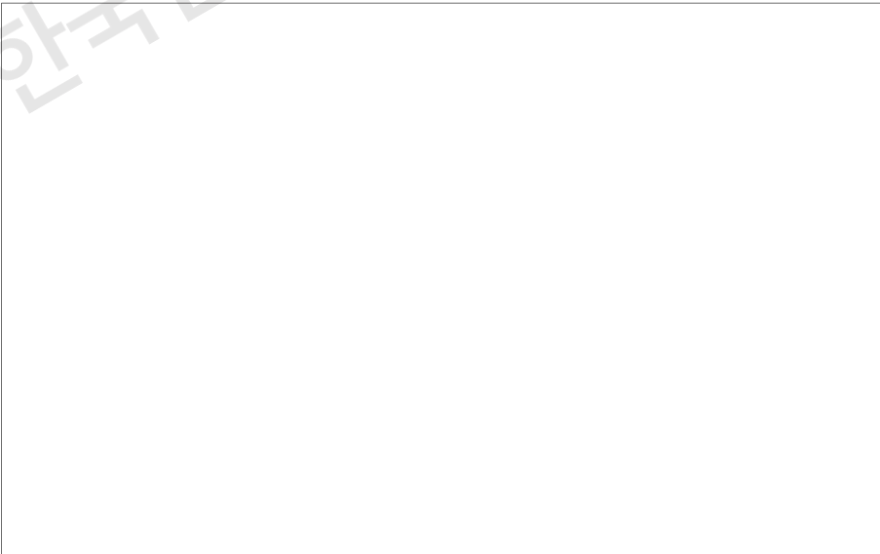
REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Lahiguera, Senior
Reviewer

criticized the two parties' for ignoring their demand to grant investigative rights to the committee. Press reports indicate that the NFP denounced NPAD's decision to nullify the terms of the bill agreed upon last week and denied the possibility of renegotiations. Embassy contacts on August 12 commented that the fractured NPAD lacks the political clout to sway the ruling party into renegotiating the terms of the bill. Our contacts also stated that if Park concedes to the NFP, NPAD hardliners likely will attack her leadership abilities.



NR

Classified By: Name: Leslie A. Bassett, Title: Deputy Chief of Mission
Office: EXEC
Agency: STATE
Reason: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)
Declassify On: 2024/08/12
W/O Attachment(s): This document is SECRET when separated from SECRET attachment(s).
Drafted By: SEOUL:Bassett, Leslie A
Released By: SEOUL:Bassett, Leslie A
Info:



NR

NR

Attachments:

Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

SECRET
Sensitive

국가안전
한국탐사저널리즘센터

From: SMART Archive
Sent: 8/25/2014 3:29:29 AM
To: svcSMARTHBTSP08
Subject: Seoul Daily for Monday, August 25, 2014

RELEASE IN
FULL

~~SECRET~~
Sensitive

NON-RESPONSIVE
PORTIONS REDACTED

MRN: 14 MDA 7313
Date/DTG: Aug 25, 2014 / 250729Z AUG 14
From: Bassett, Leslie A
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: PGOV, ECON, PREL, ETRD, EIND, KS, KN, MARR, RS
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: Seoul Daily for Monday, August 25, 2014

NR

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Lahiguera, Senior
Reviewer

NR

(SBU) Sewol Bill: Opposition Party Suggests Tripartite Negotiations, Calls for Rep. Park to Resign: On August 24, interim leader of NPAD, Rep. Park Young-sun, suggested holding tripartite negotiations and officially bringing the Sewol ferry victims' families into the negotiation of the special bill. The proposal was quickly rejected by the NFP on the basis that a tripartite consultation is "dangerous" because it would violate Korea's representative democracy and the parliamentary system. This proposal was offered after a weekend of searching for a compromise proved fruitless, and hunger strikes reached a dangerous breaking point. A victim's father and a sympathetic singer were taken to the hospital after prolonged hunger strikes. Repeated requests for President Park Geun-hye to meet with the families also went unanswered this weekend. On August 24, senior NPAD lawmakers including Representatives Moon Hee-sang, Won Hye-young and Park Byeong-seok called on Rep. Park to resign over her two failed attempts to forge a compromise over the bill. NPAD plans to hold a meeting on the evening of August 25 to readdress this issue. Contacts have previously told the Embassy that it would be hard to replace Rep. Park at the moment but several members seem to be positioning themselves for party conventions next spring when a new party leader will be elected formally. Rep. Moon Jae-in, who is among those in contention, has made it harder for Rep. Park to form party consensus by joining the families in their hunger strike.

NR



NR

Classified By: Name: Leslie A. Bassett, Title: Deputy Chief of Mission
Office: EXEC
Agency: STATE
Reason: 1.4 (a), (d)
Declassify On: 2024/08/25
Drafted By: SEOUL:Bassett, Leslie A
Released By: SEOUL:Bassett, Leslie A
Info:



NR

Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

SECRET
Sensitive

From: SMART Archive
Sent: 8/27/2014 3:35:26 AM
To: svcSMARTHBTSP0P1
Subject: NPAD Unable to Move Past Sewol Ferry Tragedy

RELEASE
IN PART
B1,1.4(D)

CONFIDENTIAL
Sensitive



MRN: 14 SEOUL 777
Date/DTG: Aug 27, 2014 / 270735Z AUG 14
From: AMEMBASSY SEOUL
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE ROUTINE
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: PGOV, KS
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: NPAD Unable to Move Past Sewol Ferry Tragedy

1. (C) Summary: Nearly one month after suffering a political blow in the July 30 by-elections, the New Politics Alliance for Democracy's (NPAD) political agenda continues to be consumed by the Sewol ferry sinking which has led to internal disputes and leadership challenges.

End summary.

NPAD without Party Unity on Sewol Bill Resolution

2. (SBU) NPAD's political agenda currently is at a standstill until it can come to an agreement with the New Frontier (Saenuri) Party (NFP) and the victims' families over the terms of the Sewol bill, but this is proving to be increasingly difficult. Despite NPAD and the NFP reaching a consensus on two separate occasions, first on August 7 and again on August 19 regarding the Sewol bill, NPAD Party leader Rep. Park was forced to renegotiate the agreement amidst mounting criticism from her party's lawmakers and the Sewol ferry victims' families who remain steadfast that they will not support the bill unless their demands to grant full investigative rights to the committee are met. NFP, however, denounced NPAD's decision to nullify twice the terms of the bill agreed upon and has denied the possibility of renegotiations. Rep. Park has since has been at an impasse between the victims' families, NFP lawmakers, and individuals within her own party.

3. (SBU) Rep. Park has been waging a two-front campaign in an attempt to move the Sewol bill forward. She visited the victims' families in Seoul's downtown Gwanghwamun Square on August 20, specifically to meet with the father of a victim who at that time was on his thirty-ninth day of a hunger strike. She also held a town-hall-like session at the National Assembly with family members. In addition, she attempted to win support in her own party by holding several party-wide meetings. The meetings concluded with the majority of the NPAD lawmakers deciding they could not support any bill absent approval from the victims' families. Unable to gain support on either front, Rep. Park was forced to ask for renegotiations. On August 24, she proposed holding tripartite negotiations and officially bringing the Sewol ferry victims' families into the negotiation of the special

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Lahiguera, Senior
Reviewer

B1
1.4(D)

bill. The proposal was quickly rejected by the NFP on the basis that a tripartite consultation was “dangerous” because it would violate Korea’s representative democracy and the parliamentary system.

4. (C) [REDACTED]

B1
1.4(D)

[REDACTED] Furthermore, on August 24, several senior NPAD lawmakers called on Rep. Park to resign over her two failed attempts to find compromise over the bill. [REDACTED]

B1
1.4(D)

5. (C) Following the resignation of NPAD leaders Ahn Cheol-soo and Kim Han-gil on July 31 over the party’s defeat in the by-elections, Representative Park Young-sun emerged as NPAD’s party leader while simultaneously maintaining her position as the party’s floor leader in the National Assembly. [REDACTED]

A New Strategy?

6. (SBU) In an attempt to shift or at least share the responsibility for producing a solution for a bill acceptable to the victims’ families, NPAD has amplified the families’ request to meet with the President. Claiming a meeting with the President would be a first step in building trust with the families that will then allow a breakthrough in the passing of the bill, NPAD members have on camera and in social media stated that it is now time for the President to get involved. NPAD party members have also systematically spoken about the need for NFP’s involvement in the process, highlighting the lack of interest NFP has shown for the victims’ families and question why the victims’ families have solely been the responsibility of the opposition party. Following such repeated calls, NFP party leader Rep. Kim Moo-sung visited the victims’ families for the first time on August 18 and on August 25, NFP floor leader Lee Wan-goo and two other senior NFP lawmakers held a roundtable discussion with representatives from the victims’ families.

B1
1.4(D)

7. (C) Both parties are keeping close tabs on public opinion polls. Academics say private polls indicate Koreans are showing signs of fatigue with this issue. However, polls show the public’s sympathy for the victims’ families is still very high. [REDACTED]

B1
1.4(D)

B1
1.4(D)

Signature: BASSETT

Classified By: Name: Angie Zeidan, Title: Political Officer
Derived From: DSCG 11-01
Declassify On: 2024/08/27
Drafted By: SEOUL:Zeidan, Angie (Seoul)
Cleared By: Seoul:Lee, Jinnie
Approved By: Seoul:Shoemaker, Lori A (Seoul)
Released By: SEOUL:Zeidan, Angie (Seoul)
Info: KOREA COLLECTIVE ROUTINE

Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
Sensitive

From: SMART Archive
Sent: 8/29/2014 3:52:23 AM
To: svcSMARTHBTSP08
Subject: Seoul Daily for Friday, August 30, 2014

RELEASE IN
FULL

CONFIDENTIAL
Sensitive

NON-RESPONSIVE PORTIONS
REDACTED

MRN: 14 MDA 7515
Date/DTG: Aug 29, 2014 / 290752Z AUG 14
From: Covert, Kevin T (Seoul)
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: EAID, ECIN, ECON, ETRD, ELTN, PREL, PGOV, MARR, SENV, UN, CH, JA, RS, KN, KS
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: Seoul Daily for Friday, August 30, 2014

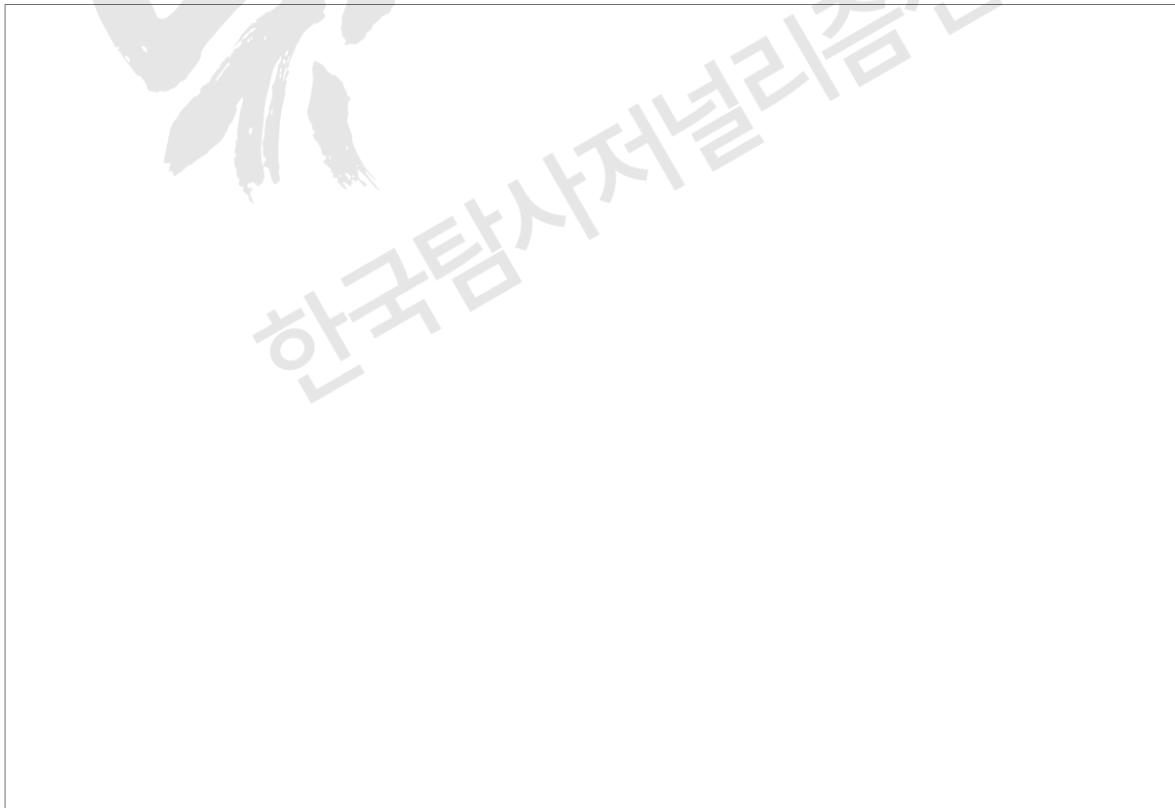
NR

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Lahiguera, Senior
Reviewer

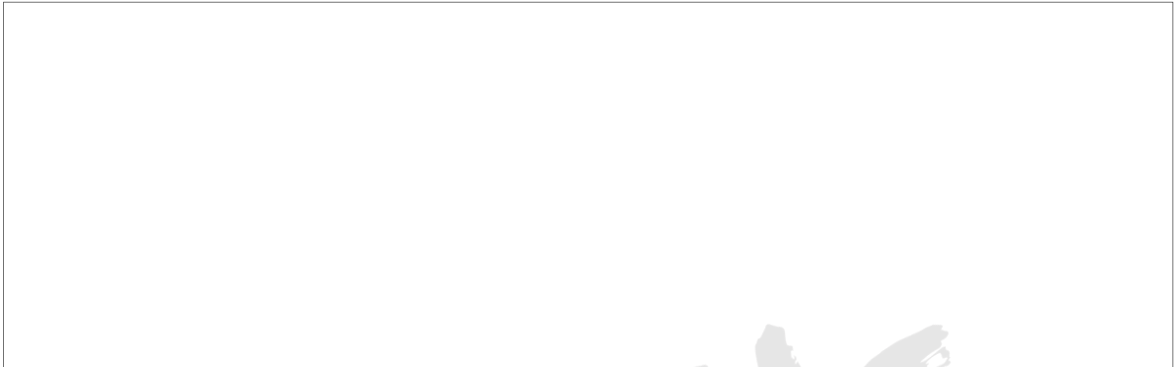


NR

(SBU) Prominent Hunger Strikes End; Opposition Likely to End Boycott: Kim Young-oh, the father of sixteen-year-old Yu-min who drowned in the Sewol ferry sinking, ended his 46-day hunger strike on August 29 amid growing concerns from his family about his health and prolonged political wrangling over the terms of the special Sewol bill. Kim is now calling for the opposition to stop their boycott and get back to work at the National Assembly “in efforts to build a safer Korea.” Former presidential candidate and NPAD Rep. Moon Jae-in followed Kim’s lead and called it quits to his own ten-day hunger strike. Kim and Moon’s decision to simultaneously end their hunger strikes probably will cause NPAD’s boycott to draw to a close and return to the regular session of the National Assembly scheduled to start September 1.



NR



NR

Classified By: Name: Kevin Covert, Title: Deputy Economic Counselor
Office: Embassy Seoul
Agency: Department of State
Derived From: DSCG 11-01
Declassify On: 2024/08/29
Drafted By: SEOUL:Covert, Kevin T (Seoul)
Released By: SEOUL:Covert, Kevin T (Seoul)
Info:



NR

Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

CONFIDENTIAL
Sensitive

From: SMART Archive
Sent: 9/16/2014 3:02:08 AM
To: svcSMARTHBTSP07
Subject: Seoul Daily for Tuesday, September 15, 2014

RELEASE IN
FULL

UNCLASSIFIED
SBU

NON-RESPONSIVE PORTIONS
REDACTED

MRN: 14 MDA 8107
Date/DTG: Sep 16, 2014 / 160702Z SEP 14
From: Bassett, Leslie A
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: ECON, ETRD, PGOV, KN, KS, PREL, PHUM, CASC, MOPS
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: Seoul Daily for Tuesday, September 15, 2014

NR

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Lahiguera, Senior
Reviewer

NR

(U) President Park Breaks Her Silence on Sewol: President Park Geun-hye in her September 16 cabinet meeting called for a swift passage of the Sewol bill and said that she would not give authority to anyone to investigate or indict those responsible for the Sewol ferry sinking because her intervention would violate the separation of powers and damage Korea's judicial system.

(U) NPAD Dismantles Emergency Committee: NPAD on September 16 dismantled its emergency committee, which was led by Rep. Park Young-sun. NPAD will nominate a new chairperson for the post. Rep. Park claims that she will resign from her position after the Assembly reaches a consensus over the Sewol bill.

NR

Drafted By: SEOUL:Bassett, Leslie A
Released By: SEOUL:Bassett, Leslie A
Info:

NR

Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

UNCLASSIFIED

SBU

국가안전
한국탐사저널리즘센터

From: SMART Archive
Sent: 9/19/2014 3:19:18 AM
To: svcSMARTHBTSP02
Subject: Seoul Daily for daymonthdate, 2014

RELEASE IN PART
B1,1.4(D),NR

NON-RESPONSIVE
PORTIONS REDACTED

CONFIDENTIAL
Sensitive

MRN: 14 MDA 8245
Date/DTG: Sep 19, 2014 / 190722Z SEP 14
From: Bauman, Kirsten S
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, PHUM, MARR, ELAB, ECON, ETRD, EFIN, EAID, SHLH, KCRM, KHIV, UNDP, UN, KS, KN, CH, JA, RS, MG, IZ, GM
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: Seoul Daily for daymonthdate, 2014

NR

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Lahiguera, Senior
Reviewer

NR



(C) [redacted] Sewol Ferry [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] As an indication of how profoundly the fallout from the ferry sinking has rocked Korean society, [redacted] cited the ongoing protests on Gwanghwamun square and the total shutdown of the National Assembly due to discord over the Sewol special bill.

B1
1.4(D)

Page Denied



NR

Classified By: Name: Kirsten Bauman, Title: ESTH
Office: ECON
Agency: DOS
Derived From: DSCG 11-01
Declassify On: 2024/09/19
Drafted By: SEOUL:Bauman, Kirsten S
Released By: SEOUL:Bauman, Kirsten S
Info:



NR

Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

CONFIDENTIAL
Sensitive

국가안전
한국탐사저널리즘센터

From: SMART Archive
Sent: 10/1/2014 3:47:22 AM
To: svcSMARTHBTSP03
Subject: Seoul Daily for Wednesday, October 1, 2014

RELEASE IN
FULL

UNCLASSIFIED
SBU

NON-RESPONSIVE PORTIONS
REDACTED

MRN: 14 MDA 8675
Date/DTG: Oct 01, 2014 / 010749Z OCT 14
From: Bassett, Leslie A
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, ETRD, EAGR, EFIN, ECON, EPET, KS, KN, RS
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: Seoul Daily for Wednesday, October 1, 2014

NR

(U) National Assembly Deadlock Ends, Over 90 Bills Passed.. The stalemate in the National Assembly ended on September 30, after the NFP and NPAD members came to an agreement on a special bill to investigate the sinking of the Sewol ferry accident, ending 150 days of legislative paralysis and allowing the Assembly to pass 91 bills. Under the agreement, the two parties consented to form a seven-member recommendation committee that will pick candidates for special prosecutor to investigate the cause of the April 16 disaster. Each party will choose two members of the committee, and remaining three members of committee will be chosen by the Ministry of Justice, the National Court Administration and the Korea Bar Association. The committee will put forth two candidates and President Park will make final decision of who will serve as special prosecutor. The lawmakers decided to postpone a decision on whether or not the families of *Sewol* victims will be a part of the recommendation process. After the announcement of the agreement was made, however, the association of bereaved families of *Sewol* victims publicly expressed their intention to refuse the agreement. Separately, the lawmakers agreed to hold parliamentary audits from October 7-27.

NR

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Lahiguera, Senior
Reviewer

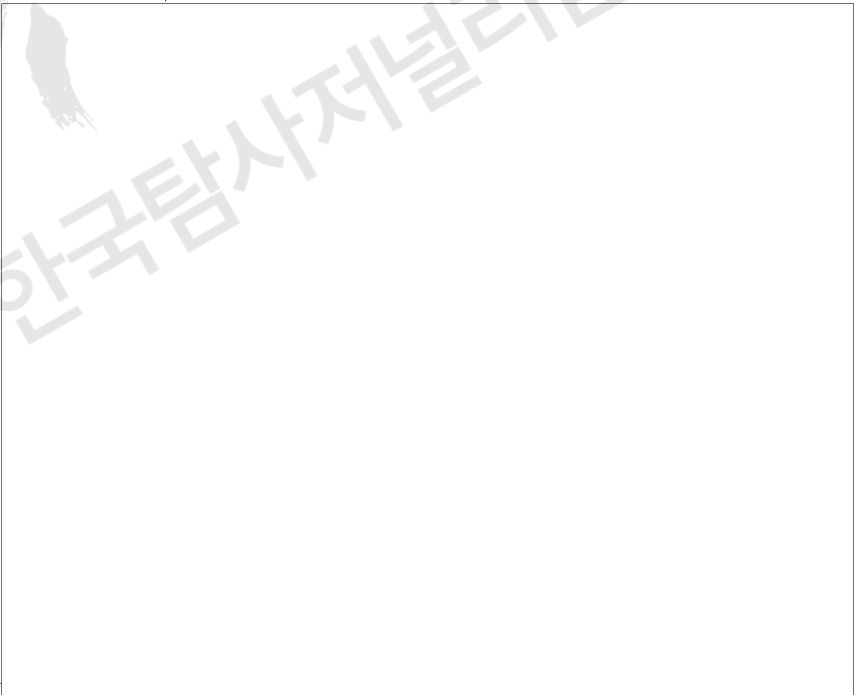
Page Denied

Page Denied



NR

Drafted By: SEOUL:Bassett, Leslie A
Approved By: SEOUL:Bassett, Leslie A
Released By: SEOUL:Bassett, Leslie A
Info:



NR

Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

UNCLASSIFIED
SBU

국가안전
한국탐사저널리즘센터

From: SMART Archive
Sent: 10/24/2014 3:18:59 AM
To: COMPACFLT PEARL HARBOR HI; WASHDC, SECSTATE; svcSMARTHBTSP0P2
Subject: Scenesetter for Admiral Harris Visit to Korea

RELEASE IN
PART
B1,1.4(D),NR

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
Sensitive



NON-RESPONSIVE
PORTIONS REDACTED

MRN: 14 SEOUL 931
Date/DTG: Oct 24, 2014 / 240719Z OCT 14
From: AMEMBASSY SEOUL
Action: COMPACFLT PEARL HARBOR HI ROUTINE ; WASHDC, SECSTATE ROUTINE
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, KNNP, MCAP, MASS, MOPS, MARR, EINT, KS, KN, JA, CH, RS
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: Scenesetter for Admiral Harris Visit to Korea

1. (C) Admiral Harris, Embassy Seoul warmly welcomes you back to the Republic of Korea (ROK).

NR

ROK Navy Continues a High Op Tempo Year

2. (C) A combination of domestic priorities and overseas commitments has made 2014 a high op tempo year for the ROK Navy.

NR

Earlier in the year, as the nation was consumed by the tragic sinking of the Sewol Ferry on April 16th, which took the lives of hundreds of students, the ROK Navy

B1
1.4(D)

NR

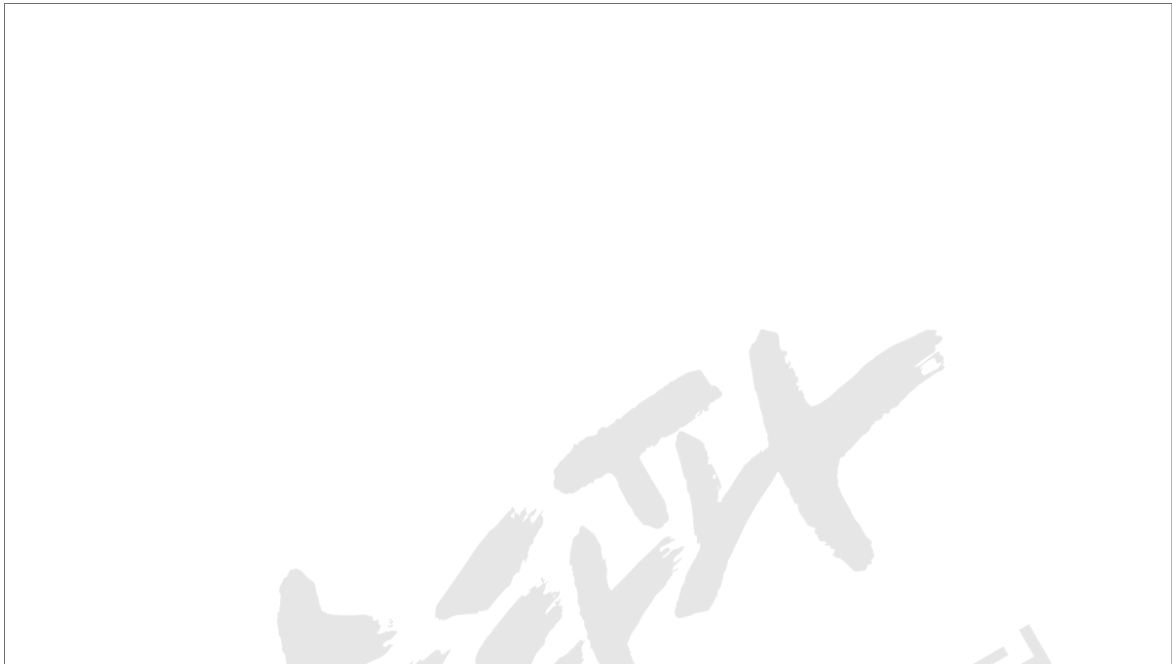
NR

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Lahiguera, Senior
Reviewer

Page Denied

Page Denied

NR



Signature: Bassett

Classified By: Name: Dewey Moore, Title: Political Officer
Office: U.S. Embassy Seoul
Agency: Department of State

Derived From: DSCG 11-01

Declassify On: 2039/10/24

Drafted By: SEOUL:Yu, Philip W; Moore, Dewey E

Cleared By: Tikvart, Daniel J
Seoul:Blackwood, Richard C (SEOUL)
Seoul:Lee, Jinnie
Seoul:Covert, Kevin T (Seoul)
Seoul: Saito, Henry T

Approved By: Bassett, Leslie A

Released By: SEOUL:Moore, Dewey E

Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

CONFIDENTIAL
Sensitive

From: SMART Archive
Sent: 11/7/2014 3:23:19 AM
To: svcSMARTHBTSP06
Subject: Seoul Daily for Friday, November 7, 2014

RELEASE IN
FULL

UNCLASSIFIED
SBU

NON-RESPONSIVE
PORTIONS REDACTED

MRN: 14 MDA 9927
Date/DTG: Nov 07, 2014 / 070823Z NOV 14
From: Tikvart, Daniel J
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, KS, KN, CH, JA, RS, ASEAN
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: Seoul Daily for Friday, November 7, 2014

(U) National Assembly Passes All Three Sewol Bills: The National Assembly on November 7 passed all three *Sewol* bills, as promised last week, a huge step forward for both parties. The bills call to dismantle the Korea Coast Guard and National Emergency Management Agency and incorporate them into the new ministerial level National Safety Agency, which is expected to be established under the Prime Minister's Office. The bills also call for an independent investigation into the ferry sinking. (Please see O-I from November 5).

NR

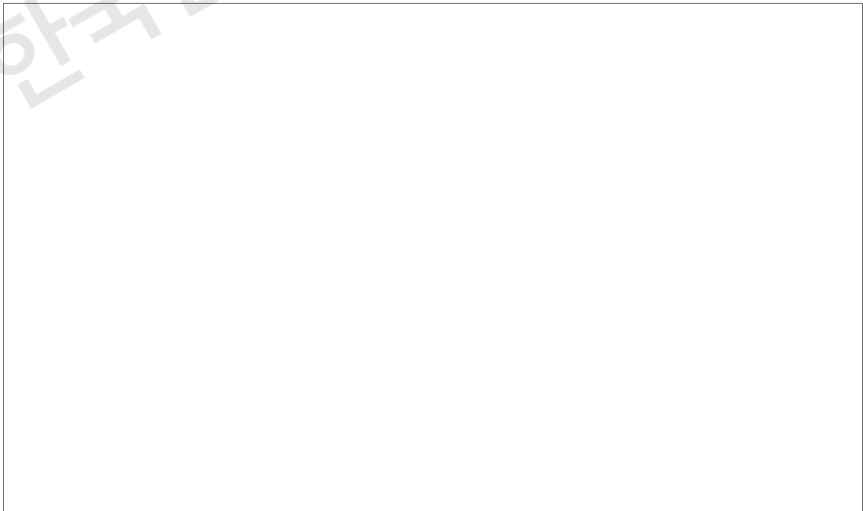
REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Lahiguera, Senior
Reviewer

NR



Drafted By: SEOUL:Tikvart, Daniel J
Approved By: SEOUL:Tikvart, Daniel J
Released By: SEOUL:Tikvart, Daniel J
Info:

NR





NR

Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

UNCLASSIFIED
SBU

국가안전
한국탐사저널리즘센터

From: SMART Archive
Sent: 11/28/2014 2:35:31 AM
To: svcSMARTHBTSP0P1
Subject: Seoul Daily for Friday, November 28, 2014

RELEASE IN
FULL

CONFIDENTIAL
Sensitive

NON-RESPONSIVE
PORTIONS REDACTED

MRN: 14 MDA 10515
Date/DTG: Nov 28, 2014 / 280735Z NOV 14
From: Bowles, Ryan E
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: MARR, MOPS, PGOV, PREL, PHUM, SHLH, EIND, ETRD, EAGR, KTIP, KN, RS, JA, KS
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: Seoul Daily for Friday, November 28, 2014



NR

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Lahiguera, Senior
Reviewer

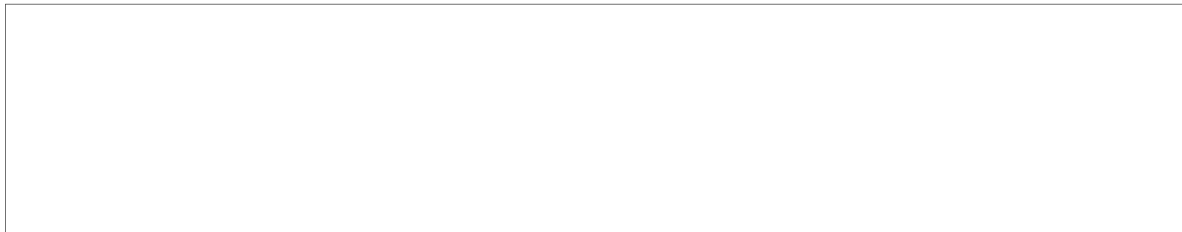
Page Denied

NR



(SBU) **Japanese Reporter Pleads Not Guilty on Defamation Charges:** Sankei Japanese journalist Tatsuya Kato pled not guilty at a court hearing on November 27 on charges that he defamed President Park Geun-hye by reporting rumors about her whereabouts on the day of the April *Sewol* ferry sinking. Kato said during the first trial session at the Seoul Central District Court that he “wrote the article to inform Japanese people of South Koreans’ awareness about the president” and that he “never intended to defame.” The indictment has sparked backlash from Japan as Tokyo claims the move discriminates against foreign media and suppressed freedom of speech. The next court date is scheduled for December 15.

NR



against women and children in Korea. Minister Kim emphasized the theme that all Koreans needed to take individual responsibility for eradicating this social problem using a pun-filled slogan *Nae ilimian naeili anjeon habnita* (“if it is my business then tomorrow will be safe”). She also noted that a nation that underwent war time sexual slavery is doubly obligated to deal with violence against women and children both domestically and on a global basis.

Classified By:	Name: Ryan Bowles, Title: Senior Trade Officer Office: Embassy Seoul Agency: U.S. Department of State
Derived From:	DSCG 11-01
Declassify On:	2039/11/28
Drafted By:	SEOUL: Bowles, Ryan E
Cleared By:	Seoul: Bowles, Ryan E
Approved By:	Seoul: Bowles, Ryan E
Released By:	SEOUL: Bowles, Ryan E
Info:	

NR

Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

CONFIDENTIAL
Sensitive

From: SMART Archive
Sent: 12/12/2014 3:48:34 AM
To: WASHDC, SECSTATE; svcSMARTHBTSP07
Cc: KOREA COLLECTIVE
Subject: [REDACTED] Park Geun-hye

RELEASE IN
PART
B1,1.4(D),NR

B1
1.4(D)

CONFIDENTIAL
Sensitive



NON-RESPONSIVE PORTIONS
REDACTED

MRN: 14 SEOUL 1105
Date/DTG: Dec 12, 2014 / 120849Z DEC 14
From: AMEMBASSY SEOUL
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE ROUTINE
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: PGOV, KS
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: [REDACTED] Park Geun-hye

B1
1.4(D)
NR

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Lahiguera, Senior
Reviewer

NR



7. (SBU) President Park has long been sensitive to issues that touch on Jeong and/or her family, and has not been afraid to go after those who raise this connection in a public forum. High profile defamation cases involving Japanese reporter Tatsuya Kato of Sankei Shimbun and opposition leader Park Jie-won center around rumors of a relationship between President Park and Jeong. The Sankei journalist reported that President Park had been with a key adviser – Jeong – in her private residence during the time of the Sewol ferry sinking and that she could not be reached for seven hours. Rep. Park Jie-won claimed on a radio show that an unofficial group called “man-man-hoi” – referring to Park Ji-man, Lee Jae-man, and Jeong Yun-hoe – intervened in personnel decisions at the Blue House. President Park has even cracked down on internet postings about this rumor; most

recently a woman only identified as Tak was sentenced to four months in prison for claiming on an online forum that President Park had an affair with both Jeong Yun-hoe, and his father-in-law and her former mentor Choi Tae-min. The prosecutor's proactive vigilance and the zero-tolerance approach by President Park's administration has sparked pushback from the opposition and the public, and raised suspicions about her heightened sensitivity to these particular sets of rumors.

NR



NR



B1
1.4(D)

Signature: Lippert

Classified By: Name: Ed Dong, Title: POL M/C
Derived From: DSCG 11-01
Declassify On: 2024/12/12
Drafted By: SEOUL:Lee, Jinnie
Cleared By: Seoul:Dong, Edward K
Approved By: Seoul:Dong, Edward K
Released By: SEOUL:Lee, Jinnie
Info: KOREA COLLECTIVE ROUTINE

Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

CONFIDENTIAL
Sensitive

From: SMART Archive
Sent: 1/27/2015 2:19:21 AM
To: SMART Core
Subject: Seoul Daily for January 27, 2015

RELEASE IN
FULL

UNCLASSIFIED
SBU

NON-RESPONSIVE PORTIONS
REDACTED

MRN: 15 MDA 779
Date/DTG: Jan 27, 2015 / 270719Z JAN 15
From: Lee, Jinnie
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, PTER, MARR, CO, PE, KS, JA
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: Seoul Daily for January 27, 2015

NR

(SBU) Race for NFP Floor Leader: Rep. Lee Ju-young declared his candidacy for floor leader of the NFP (Saenuri Party) on January 25. Rep. Lee who resigned as the Minister of Ocean and Fisheries in December is the first to announce his candidacy to replace former floor leader Rep. Lee Wan-goo who resigned from his post after being tapped as the new Prime Minister. Rep. Yoo Seong-min is expected to follow and declare his candidacy for the position later today or tomorrow. The race for NFP party floor leader is now largely between a Pro-Park and a non-Park candidate. Rep. Lee is close to the pro-Park support base. He has been credited for his dedication during the recovery efforts at the Sewol ferry sinking site and is only one of few in the Park administration who was not criticized by the public during the Sewol aftermath. Rep. Yoo, on the other hand, was once a supporter of President Park but has since grown apart from the pro-Park faction and is now close to a cohort that includes NFP party chairman Kim Moo-sung. The new floor leader will be in a position to help President Park carry out reforms in the third year of her term and the Blue House is using its party connections to push for the election of Rep. Lee.

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Lahiguera, Senior
Reviewer

A vote is expected to be held February 2.



NR

Drafted By: SEOUL:Lee, Jinnie
Approved By: SEOUL:Lee, Jinnie
Released By: SEOUL:Lee, Jinnie
Info:



NR



NR

Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

UNCLASSIFIED
SBU

국가안전
한국탐사저널리즘센터

From: SMART Archive
Sent: 1/29/2015 2:23:33 AM
To: SMART Core
Subject: Seoul Daily for Thursday, January 29, 2015

RELEASE IN
FULL

NON-RESPONSIVE PORTIONS
REDACTED

UNCLASSIFIED
SBU

MRN: 15 MDA 877
Date/DTG: Jan 29, 2015 / 290723Z JAN 15
From: Lee, Jinnie
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, MASS, ECON, ETRD, KS, KN, AF
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: Seoul Daily for Thursday, January 29, 2015

NR

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Lahiguera, Senior
Reviewer



NR

(SBU) Defense Industry Corruption Investigations Lead to Arrests and Suicide: The son of former ROK Chief of Naval Operations retired Admiral Jung Ok-geun was arrested on January 28 over allegations that he and his father took bribes from the shipbuilding conglomerate STX Group, according to *Yonhap*. Retired Admiral Jung and his son allegedly took bribes of \$647,000 from STX Group in the form of sponsorship to a October 2008 yacht event which was organized by a company whose majority stake was owned by Jung's eldest son, according to the government anti-corruption task force investigating the case. Media reports that they have collected enough evidence to show that the sponsorship was a cover-up for bribes in exchange for favorable contracts for the nation's shipbuilding projects. A former Navy commander, Yun Yeon, who currently works as an adviser at STX, was also arrested over allegedly collaborating with Jung and his son. In another anti-corruption case, former Rear Admiral Ham, who had been summoned for questioning allegedly involving the on-going investigation of the salvage ship Tongyeong which failed to provide assistance during the Sewol Ferry Tragedy, committed suicide on January 28, according to *Hankook Ilbo*. Ham had worked at the bureau in charge of the vessel project at the ROK Defense Acquisition Program Administration, according to the article.



NR



NR

Drafted By: SEOUL:Lee, Jinnie
Approved By: SEOUL:Lee, Jinnie
Released By: SEOUL:Lee, Jinnie
Info:



NR



NR

Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

UNCLASSIFIED
SBU

국가안전
한국탐사저널리즘센터

From: SMART Archive
Sent: 3/23/2015 5:55:33 AM
To: SMART Core
Subject: Scenesetter for Assistant Secretary Rivkin's March 30-April 3 Visit to the Republic of Korea

RELEASE IN PART
B1,1.4(D),NR

NON-RESPONSIVE PORTIONS
REDACTED

UNCLASSIFIED
SBU



Classified by DAS, A/GIS, DoS on 04/22/2016 ~ Class: CONFIDENTIAL ~ Reason: 1.4(D)
~ Declassify on: 03/23/2025

MRN: 15 SEOUL 404
Date/DTG: Mar 23, 2015 / 230952Z MAR 15
From: AMEMBASSY SEOUL
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE ROUTINE
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: ECON, ETRD, EFIN, EINT, PREL, KS, PGOV, MARR, KN, CH, JA, RS, IR
Captions: SENSITIVE
Pass Line: PASS EB
PASS EAP/K
Subject: Scenesetter for Assistant Secretary Rivkin's March 30-April 3 Visit to the Republic of Korea

1. (SBU) Assistant Secretary Rivkin, Embassy Seoul welcomes you to the Republic of Korea (ROK).



NR

Attack on the Ambassador



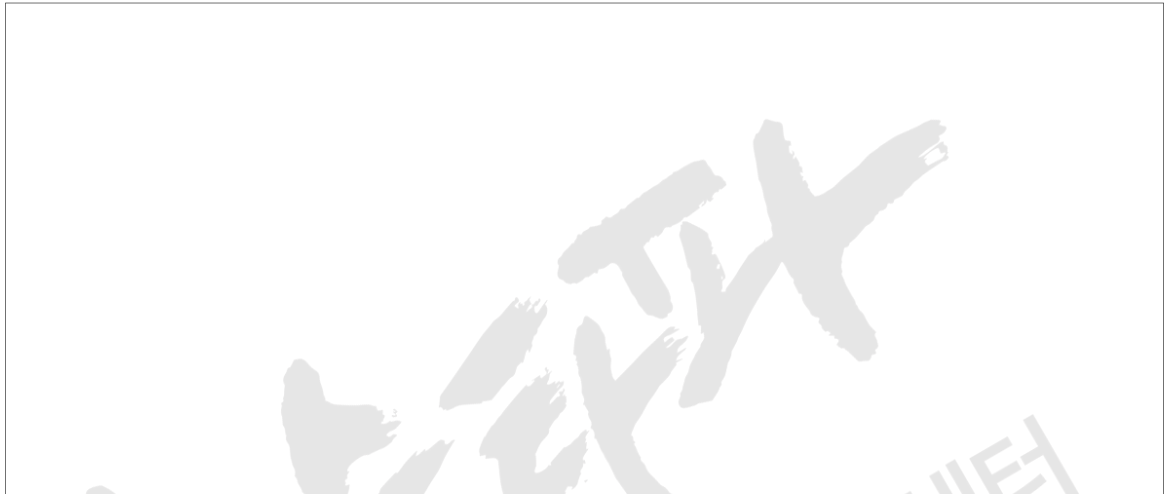
NR

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Lahiguera, Senior
Reviewer



NR

ROK Macroeconomic Environment



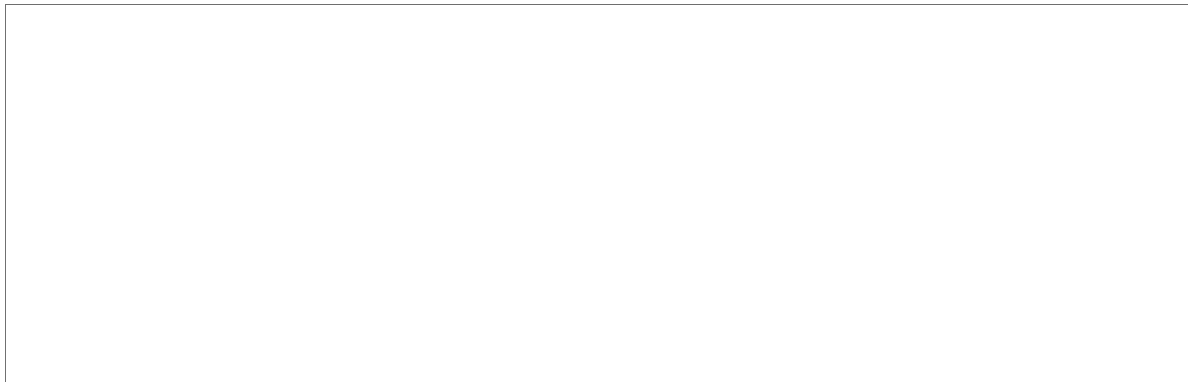
NR

ROK Pushes Entrepreneurship



NR

KORUS Boosts Trade Volumes



NR



NR

The Next Big Thing: Moving from KORUS to TPP



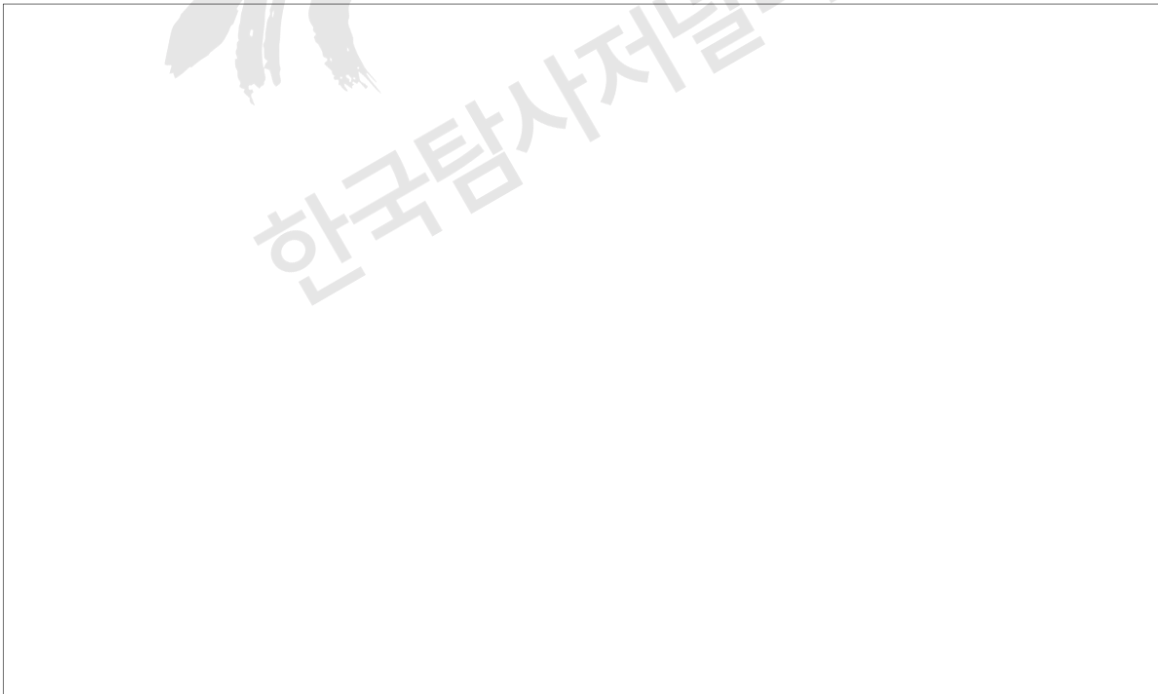
NR

ROK Likely to Join Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank



NR

Maintaining the Strength of the Alliance and Military Procurements



NR

[Redacted]

NR

Korea's Regional Situation

NR



President Park and Domestic Politics

15. (SBU) President Park became the first female head-of-state in Northeast Asia and the first South Korean leader to win the presidency with a majority when she assumed her post in February 2013 for a single, five year term. Her rise to leadership is also notable because of the controversial legacy of her father's nearly two decades of authoritarian rule— Park Chung-hee (1961-79). Since taking office, President Park has struggled domestically to gain the momentum she needs to push her domestic, mostly economic, agenda forward. Although her ruling New Frontier Party (NFP) maintains a majority in the National Assembly, President Park has been stymied with trying to overcome perceptions that her administration failed in its response to the April 16, 2014 Sewol ferry tragedy where over 300 lives—mostly high school students—were lost. Recent scandals involving the Blue House led to an all-time low approval rating, dipping below 30 percent in February, that brought about a power shift in her party, giving rise to a faction openly critical of her policies.

[Redacted]

1.4(D)
B1

[Redacted]

President Park's strength has been foreign affairs and diplomacy, and a recent successful trip to the Middle East, [Redacted] has contributed to President Park's approval rating rebounding to the high 40 percent range. [Redacted]

[Redacted]

1.4(D)
B1
B1
1.4(D)

Press and Public Diplomacy



NR

Signature: Lippert

Drafted By: SEOUL:Liu, Kendrick M
Cleared By: SEOUL/EMB/ECON:Bauman, Kirsten S
SEOUL/EMB/ECON:Bowles, Ryan E
SEOUL/EMB/ECON:Covert, Kevin T
SEOUL/EMB/POL:Lee, Jinnie
SEOUL/EMB/POL:Choi, Sung W
SEOUL/EMB/POL:Tikvart, Daniel J
SEOUL/EMB/POL:Shoemaker, Lori A
SEOUL/ANNEX/PA:Kral, Alexei T
SEOUL/EMB/RSO:Powers, William P
JUSMAG-K:COL Hansen, Dan
Approved By: SEOUL/EMB/MGT:Siegel, Andrew D
Released By: SEOUL:Liu, Kendrick M

Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

UNCLASSIFIED
SBU

From: SMART Archive
Sent: 3/23/2015 11:33:26 PM
To: SMART Core

RELEASE IN PART
1.4(B),B1,1.4(D),NR,B6

Subject: Amid Public Outrage, Investigations on ROK Defense Industry Corruption

B1
1.4(D)

CONFIDENTIAL
Sensitive



NON-RESPONSIVE PORTIONS
REDACTED

MRN: 15 SEOUL 219
Date/DTG: Mar 24, 2015 / 240332Z MAR 15
From: AMEMBASSY SEOUL
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE ROUTINE
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, MCAP, MASS, MARR, KS
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: Amid Public Outrage, Investigations on ROK Defense Industry Corruption

1. (C) SUMMARY: Since November 2014, the South Korean government has been engaged in what the media has started to call a "war on corruption," which has primarily targeted the defense industry. In the aftermath of the *Sewol* ferry sinking accident of April 2014, widespread outrage over the government's inept rescue response shined a light on procurement irregularities underlying the *Tongyeong*, a salvage vessel indigenously designed and built for the Republic of Korea (ROK) Navy that was unavailable for deployment during the accident due to substandard equipment. This anger was further fueled by the numerous indictments resulting from investigations conducted by the newly created anti-corruption Joint Investigation Team (JIT), as well as press reports criticizing the ineffectiveness of the Defense Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA) in preventing these corruption cases.

B1
1.4(B)
1.4(D)

END SUMMARY.

NR

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Lahiguera, Senior
Reviewer

NR

Joint Investigation Team Sinks Current and Former CNOs

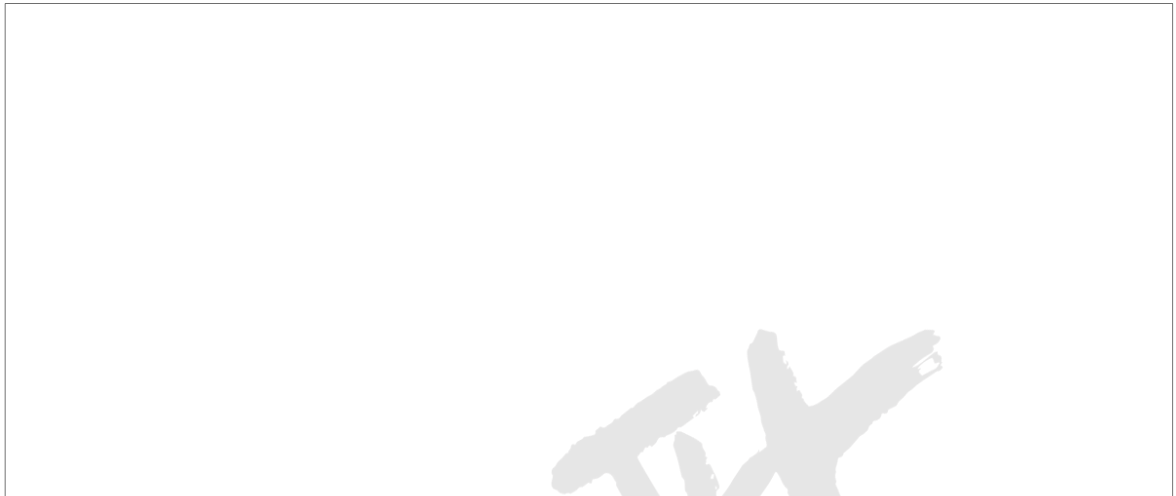
3. (SBU) In November 2014, the ROK government launched a 105-member interagency special Joint Investigation Team (JIT) to probe the defense industry for instances of corruption. The JIT is unprecedented in its size and composition, which includes representatives from the Supreme Prosecutors' Office, Ministry of National Defense (MND), National Police Agency, and four other agencies. In early March, ROK press widely reported on the team's progress after the first 100 days, which involve projects that total approximately \$176 million in worth and have resulted in 24 indictments, including six general level officers.

4. (SBU) The team's primary task has been the investigation of corruption linked to the faulty ROK-made rescue and salvage Navy ship, the 3500-ton *Tongyeong*, which failed to provide assistance during the Sewol tragedy due to defective parts. According to the December 2014 report by the ROK Board of Audit and Inspection (BAI), between 2009 and 2011, a DAPA official, through a retired ROK colonel acting as the broker, colluded with Hackenco/GMB-USA in fixing the Request for Proposals on the Hull Mounted Sonar (HMS) system in exchange for bribes of about \$555,000, resulting in the purchase of faulty and overpriced systems that did not qualify under the ROK Navy's internal review. The GMB-USA President and nine other individuals, including a former ROK Navy Captain, were indicted and, on February 23, the ROKG accepted the resignation of ROK Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Admiral Hwang Ki-chul. Although the BAI report concluded that Hwang was not directly involved with the corruption case, the Board recommended MND take personnel action against Hwang for his oversight and responsibility as head of the bureau in charge of the vessel project during the period in question. On March 22, Hwang was arrested and detained by the JIT on charges of knowingly approving the substandard equipment and other possible misconduct as head of the bureau, according to *Donga Ilbo*, a conservative newspaper.

5. (SBU) In another high-profile case, former ROK CNO retired Admiral Jung Ok-geun and his son were arrested over allegations that they took bribes of \$647,000 from the shipbuilding conglomerate STX Group. The JIT found that the kickbacks were paid in October 2008 while Jung was serving as the CNO, in exchange for favorable contracts related to guided missile patrol boat engines. According to *Donga Ilbo*, the JIT is also investigating Jung for possible involvement in the *Tongyeong* case, which occurred while he was serving as CNO. In late January, press also reported that a former Rear Admiral, identified by the media as RDML Ham, who had served as the head of the vessel development bureau and had been working as a senior advisor for a major defense company after retirement committed suicide after he was brought in for questioning by the JIT regarding undisclosed corruption cases.

NR

Page Denied



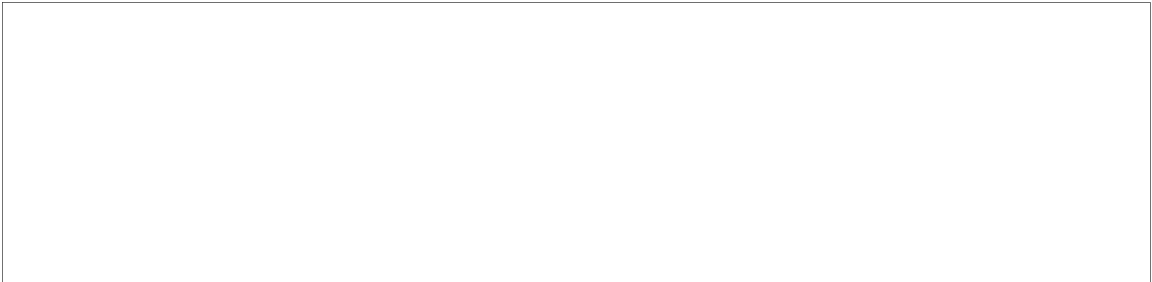
NR



B1
1.4(B)
1.4(D)



NR



NR



B1
1.4(B)
1.4(D)

15. (C) COMMENT: On March 12, Chairman Lee Kyu-tae of *Ilgwang*, a major ROK weapons brokerage firm, was charged by the JIT with allegedly inflating the prices of the Electronic Warfare Training System (EWTS) that was designed to train pilots in the ROK Air Force and using the funds to pay bribes to ROK officials.

B1
1.4(D)



the *Sewol* tragedy and the series of military scandals

END

COMMENT.

Signature: Lippert

Classified By: Name: Mark W. Lippert, Title: Ambassador
Office: U.S. Embassy Seoul

Derived From: DSCG 11-01

Declassify On: 2025/03/24

Drafted By: SEOUL:Yee, Samuel S (Seoul)

Cleared By: Seoul:Covert, Kevin T (Seoul)
Tikvart, Daniel J
Seoul:Lee, Jinnie
Seoul:Shoemaker, Lori A (Seoul)

Seoul:Dong, Edward K

B6

Approved By: Siegel, Andrew D (Seoul)
Released By: SEOUL:Yee, Samuel S (Seoul)
Info: KOREA COLLECTIVE ROUTINE

Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

CONFIDENTIAL
Sensitive

국가보안
한국탐사저널리즘센터

From: SMART Archive
Sent: 4/1/2015 4:47:10 AM
To: SMART Core
Subject: Scenesetter for Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter's Visit to Seoul

RELEASE IN
FULL

CONFIDENTIAL
Sensitive



NON-RESPONSIVE PORTIONS
REDACTED

MRN: 15 SEOUL 245
Date/DTG: Apr 01, 2015 / 010845Z APR 15
From: AMEMBASSY SEOUL
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE ROUTINE
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, MARR, MASS, ECON, ETRD, EFIN, ENRG, KNNP, KS, KN, JA, CH, RS
Captions: SENSITIVE
Reference: 15 SEOUL 219
Pass Line: OSD
Subject: Scenesetter for Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter's Visit to Seoul

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Lahiguera, Senior
Reviewer

1. (SBU) Secretary Carter, Embassy Seoul warmly welcomes you to the Republic of Korea (ROK) for your first visit as Secretary of Defense.

NR

Maintaining the Strength of the Alliance

NR

Page Denied

NR

ROK Military Facing Public Outrage Over Scandals

8. (SBU) National Security Advisor and former Minister of National Defense Kim Kwan-jin and Minister Han have faced heavy criticism from the South Korean public and the National Assembly, following a series of high-profile scandals that involve the ROK military. In the aftermath of the Sewol ferry sinking accident of April 2014, widespread outrage over the government's inept rescue response shined a light on procurement irregularities underlying the *Tongyeong*, a salvage vessel that was unavailable for deployment during the accident due to substandard equipment. This anger has been further fueled by corruption investigations into the defense industry, which has so far resulted in 24 indictments, including two former ROK Navy Chiefs of Naval Operations. (See refel A for further details). Serious cases of military hazing and bullying also hit the news in 2014, most notably the death of a private, who suffered from regular and ultimately fatal abuse by his senior comrades, and the shooting spree by another bullied soldier that resulted in the death of five soldiers. In addition to the abuse cases, the Commander of the First ROK Army resigned in September amid controversy over disorderly public behavior and a ROK Army Major General was arrested in October on charges of sexually abusing his female subordinate. A ROK Rear Admiral is also currently under investigation for allegedly sexually harassing a golf caddy. The ROK military has responded to public outrage over these scandals with pledges to reform its system, but the public and press have remained skeptical.

ROK-DPRK Relations Remain Tense

NR

Page Denied



NR

Expanding Global Role



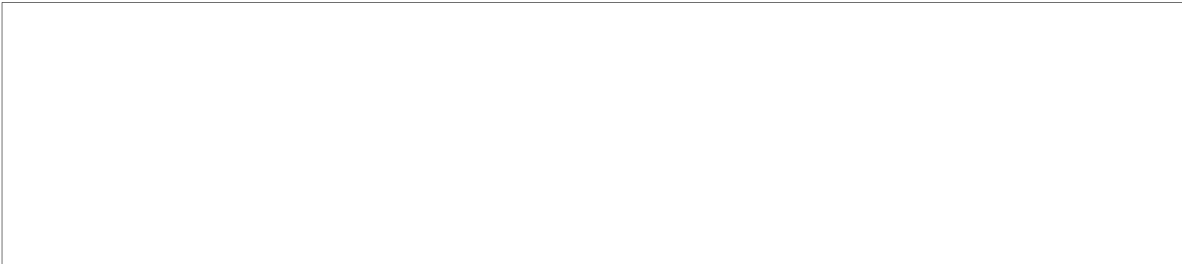
NR

President Park and Domestic Politics

14. (SBU) President Park became the first female head of state in Northeast Asia when she assumed her post in February 2013 for a single, five-year term. Her rise to leadership is also notable because of the controversial legacy of her father's nearly two decades of authoritarian rule and her insular leadership style. Since taking office, Park has had more successes on the diplomatic front than domestically. In 2014, she was stymied in trying to overcome perceptions that her government failed in its response to the April 16 Sewol ferry disaster where over 300 lives—mostly high school students—were lost. The Blue House then endured another crisis with the “Memo-gate” scandal—a flood of disclosures about her personnel management. This coupled with a controversial tax policy have steadily inflicted damage on her popularity. Under pressure, President Park carried out a reshuffle of key officials in late February, most notably replacing the Prime Minister with senior lawmaker Lee Wan-koo, and appointing the former director of the National Intelligence Service, Lee Byung-kee, as the new Blue House Chief of Staff.

15. (SBU) Other notable issues in Korean politics include concerns over the ROK's National Security Law, which prohibits anti-state activities that praise, encourage, or propagandize North Korean political ideals. A Korean-American woman was deported in January over her pro-North Korea remarks during talk shows and will be barred from entering South Korea for five years. In December, the Constitutional Court disbanded the left-leaning United Progressive Party, marking the first time a South Korean political party has been disbanded by court or government order since South Korea adopted its first constitution in 1948. The ROK is considering bringing charges of violating the National Security Law (in addition to attempted murder charges) against the extremist who attacked Ambassador Lippert. The ROK has applied its libel law against the Seoul bureau editor of the Japanese newspaper *Sankei Shimbun* for defaming President Park by reporting rumors that she was in an undisclosed meeting with a former aide as the Sewol tragedy was unfolding, placing a travel ban on the editor while the case is pending. The case has been a source of ongoing friction with Japan, which has raised concerns over the indictment, claiming that the move suppresses freedom of speech.

123 Agreement Nearing Conclusion



NR

KORUS Boosts Trade Volumes



NR

Press & Public Diplomacy



NR

Signature:	Lippert
<hr/>	
Classified By:	Name: Mark W. Lippert, Title: Ambassador Office: U.S. Embassy Seoul
Derived From:	DSCG 11-01
Declassify On:	2025/04/01
Drafted By:	SEOUL:Yee, Samuel S (Seoul)
Cleared By:	Zeidan, Angie (Seoul)

EXEC:Ogburn, Robert W (Seoul)
Seoul:Choi, Sung W (Seoul)
Tikvar, Daniel J
Seoul:Covert, Kevin T (Seoul)
Seoul:Shoemaker, Lori A (Seoul)
Seoul:Dong, Edward K
USFK:LTC Montgomery C. Erfourth
DAO:COL Darrell H. Zemitis
JUSMAG-K:COL Dan R. Hanson
ECON:Tamowka, Mary E
Approved By: SEOUL:Yee, Samuel S (Seoul)
Released By: KOREA COLLECTIVE ROUTINE
Info:

Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

CONFIDENTIAL
Sensitive

From: SMART Archive
Sent: 4/6/2015 4:10:23 AM
To: SMART Core
Subject: Seoul Daily for Monday, April 6, 2015

RELEASE IN
FULL

NON-RESPONSIVE PORTIONS
REDACTED

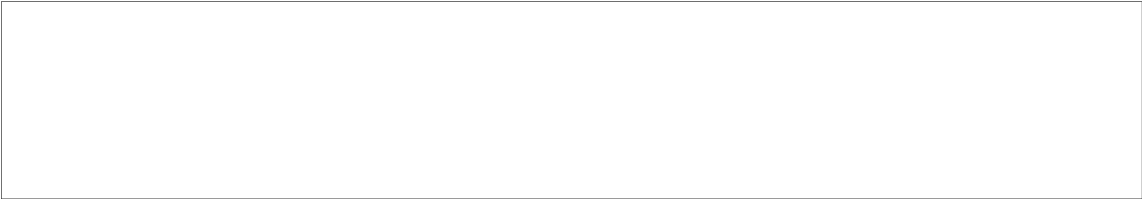
UNCLASSIFIED

MRN: 15 MDA 3309
Date/DTG: Apr 06, 2015 / 060810Z APR 15
From: Tikvat, Daniel J
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, KS, JA
Subject: Seoul Daily for Monday, April 6, 2015

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Lahiguera, Senior
Reviewer

(U) Sewol Ferry Victims Compensation Package Announced: Leading up to the one year anniversary of the Sewol ferry sinking on April 16, the ROK government announced April 1 a compensation package for the families of the victims: an average of KRW 820 million for families of the Danwon High School students, KRW 1.14 billion for the teachers, and between KRW 450-900 million for others depending on their age, job, and expected income. The compensation is comprised of government funds, public donations, and insurance payments. The support and memorial committee, separate from the compensation committee, announced April 3 provision of financial support, medical treatment, and other administrative support to the victims' families. For example, families of the victims will be given living expenses of about KRW 1.1 million for up to six months. The government will also provide free counseling at the Ansan Trauma Center and 212 mental health centers across the country and compensate people who need medical treatment for trauma including time off from work. Some relatives of the victims reacted with anger to the compensation plan, claiming the government was trying to buy their silence, and 48 of them shaved their heads in protest in Gwanghwamun Square, and four more in Jindo, the site of the sinking. Relatives of victims also started a 416-hour protest April 6 that will end on the first anniversary of the accident on April 16. The family members are enraged at the idea of government officials working on the special investigation team especially members of the maritime ministry and the Coast Guard who they hold partially responsible for the sinking. They state the government officials will undermine the team's work and stop the truth from getting out. The families are also calling for the ship to be salvaged. The Blue House has yet to announced if President Park will participate in any of the one-year anniversary ceremonies.

NR



NR

Drafted By: SEOUL:Tikvart, Daniel J
Cleared By: Seoul:Lee, Jinnie
Tikvart, Daniel J
Approved By: Tikvart, Daniel J
Released By: SEOUL:Tikvart, Daniel J
Info:



NR

NR

Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

UNCLASSIFIED

국가안전
한국탐사저널리즘센터

From: SMART Archive
Sent: 4/16/2015 4:09:47 AM
To: SMART Core
Subject: Tokyo Daily Activity Report: April 16, 2015

RELEASE IN PART
1.4(B),B1,1.4(D),NR

CONFIDENTIAL
Sensitive

NON-RESPONSIVE
PORTIONS REDACTED

MRN: 15 FTR 1291
Date/DTG: Apr 16, 2015 / 160809Z APR 15
From: Donadieu, Noah A
To: SMART Archive
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, JA
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: Tokyo Daily Activity Report: April 16, 2015

CONFIDENTIAL

[REDACTED]

NR

(C) Japan-ROK:

[REDACTED]

NR

[REDACTED] the sinking of
the Sewol ferry, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

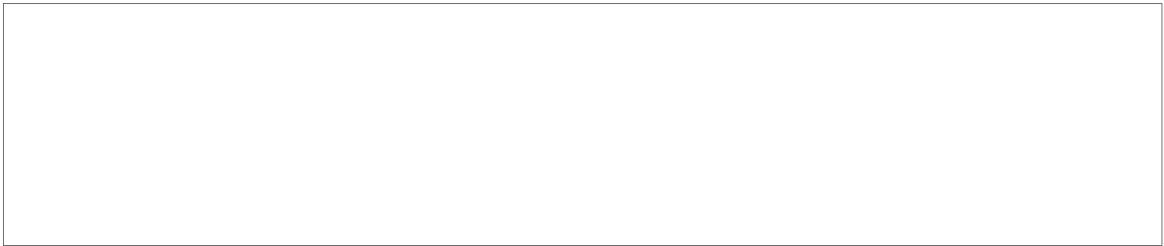
B1
1.4(B)
1.4(D)

NR

[REDACTED]

NR

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Lahiguera, Senior
Reviewer



NR

Classified By:	Name: Jason Hyland, Title: DCM Office: U.S. Embassy
Derived From:	DSCG 11-01
Declassify On:	2040/04/16
Drafted By:	TOKYO:Donadieu, Noah A
Released By:	TOKYO:Donadieu, Noah A
Dissemination Rule:	Archive Copy

CONFIDENTIAL
Sensitive

From: SMART Archive
Sent: 4/16/2015 3:54:34 AM
To: SMART Core
Subject: Seoul Daily for Thursday April 16, 2015

RELEASE IN
FULL

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
Sensitive

NON-RESPONSIVE PORTIONS
REDACTED

MRN: 15 MDA 3657
Date/DTG: Apr 16, 2015 / 160754Z APR 15
From: Rajic, Denis
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: ECON, ETRD, ELTN, EWWT, PGOV, PREL, KS, KN, RS
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: Seoul Daily for Thursday April 16, 2015



NR

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Lahiguera, Senior
Reviewer

(SBU) President Park Visits Sewol Site, Pledges to Salvage Ferry: President Park delayed her departure for South America by two hours to visit Paengmok Harbor in Jindo, the site of the sinking of the *Sewol* ferry. Commemorating the one year anniversary of the tragedy, President Park vowed to “take all measure necessary to recover the nine still missing” and pledged to salvage the ship as soon as possible. The victims' family members left the port before President Park’s arrival in an apparent sign of protest. Earlier in the day, the bereaved families also refused to meet with Prime Minister Lee Wan-koo who was barred from entering the site. The National Assembly adopted a resolution this morning calling for the speedy recovery of the ferry, stating regardless of cost, it could help heal the suffering of the victims' families and survivors.

NR



Classified By:	Name: Sharyn Fitzgerald, Title: Staff Aide Office: EXEC Agency: Department of State
Derived From:	DSCG 11-01
Declassify On:	2025/04/16
Drafted By:	SEOUL:Rajic, Denis
Cleared By:	Seoul:Liu, Kendrick M (SEOUL) Seoul:Lee, Jinnie
Approved By:	Seoul:Rajic, Denis

Released By:
Info:

SEOUL:Rajic, Denis

NR

Dissemination Rule:

Archive Copy

CONFIDENTIAL
Sensitive

From: SMART Archive
Sent: 9/4/2015 2:36:38 AM
To: SMART Core

RELEASE
IN FULL

Subject: Scen setter for Health and Human Services Secretary Burwell's September 7-10 Visit to the Republic of Korea

UNCLASSIFIED
SBU



NON-RESPONSIVE
PORTIONS REDACTED

MRN: 15 SEOUL 1492
Date/DTG: Sep 04, 2015 / 040634Z SEP 15
From: AMEMBASSY SEOUL
Action: WASHDC, SECSTATE IMMEDIATE ; DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC ROUTINE
E.O.: 13526
TAGS: SHLH, TSPL, TBIO, ECON, EAID, KHIV, HHS, NIH, WHO, AID, KS
Captions: SENSITIVE
Subject: Scen setter for Health and Human Services Secretary Burwell's September 7-10 Visit to the Republic of Korea

REVIEW AUTHORITY: Charles Lahiguera, Senior
Reviewer

1. (SBU) Secretary Burwell, Embassy Seoul warmly welcomes you to the Republic of Korea (ROK) for the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) High-Level Meeting. Your visit will help to expand cooperation in public health and health security with the Republic of Korea and could not have come at a more opportune time. The Park Administration and the new Minister of Health and Welfare are hoping to improve South Korea's public health system and share its experience in responding to the MERS outbreak with GHSA partners as a way to contribute to global efforts to establish an advanced global health security network.

NR

Page Denied

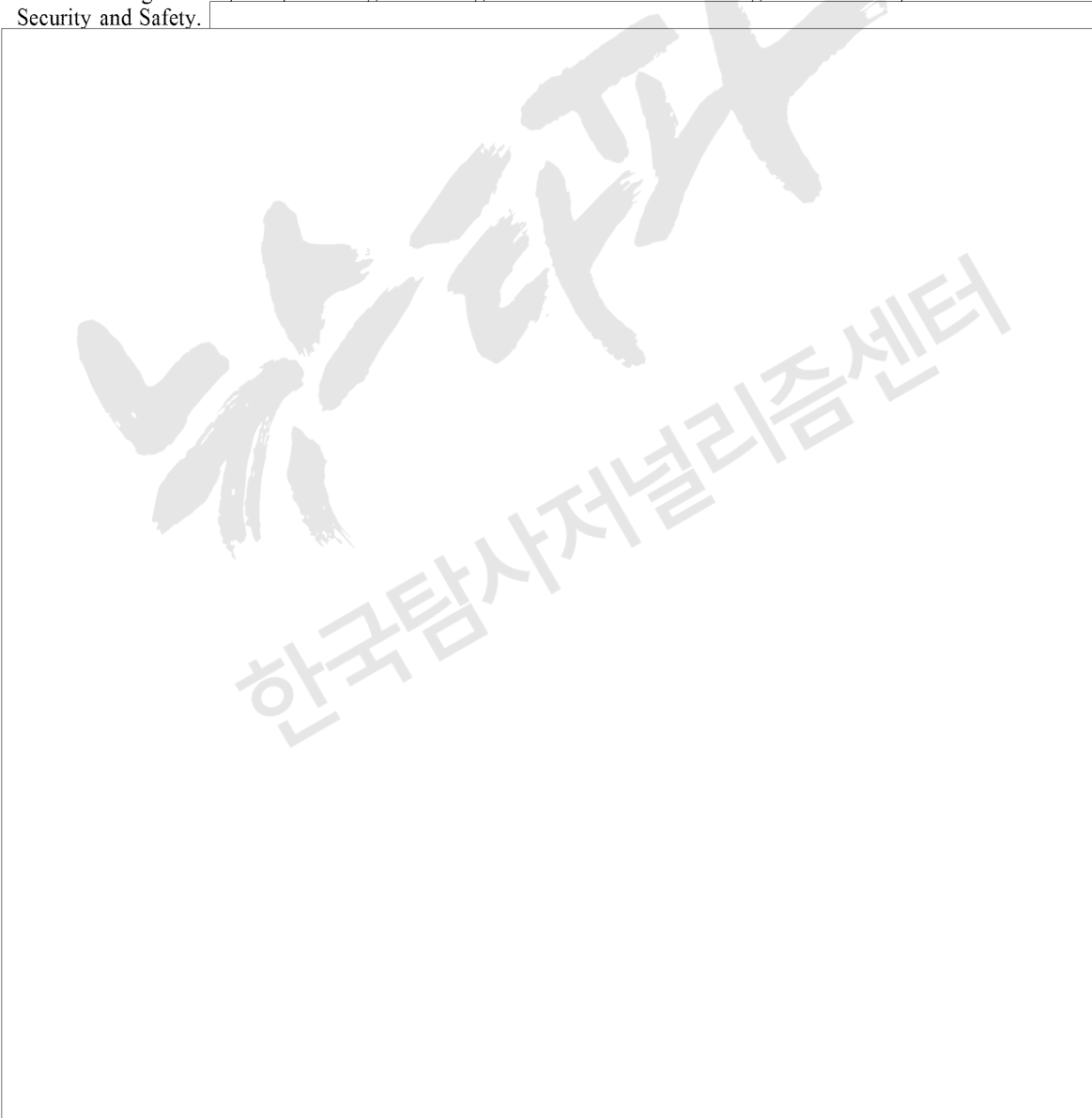


NR

Public Perceptions of the Government

9. (SBU) After witnessing the government's repeated failures in its emergency and disaster management, public distrust in the Park Administration's crisis management capabilities has been high, while the public's expectations for post-MERS reform remain low (although the President's deft handling of the recent spike in North-South tensions has won her renewed support). The Sewol ferry sinking in April 2014, which claimed more than 300 lives – mostly high school students – prompted the government to implement an extensive reform of its disaster management system, including disbanding the Coast Guard and creating a new Ministry of Public Security and Safety.

NR



NR



Signature: Lippert

Drafted By: SEOUL:Bae, Eugene (ESTH); Lee, Ji Yeoun (ESTH)
Cleared By: SEOUL/EMB/ECON:Hillbery, Benjamin J
SEOUL/EMB/EXEC:Knapper, Marc E
GSO:Yamamura, Joy K
SEOUL/EMB/ECON:Covert, Kevin T
SEOUL/EMB/POL:Tikvart, Daniel J
SEOUL/EMB/POL:Moore, Dewey E
SEOUL/ANNEX/PA:Mooney, Robert B
SEOUL/ANNEX/PA:Turnbull, Daniel
SEOUL/EMB/DAO:Zemitis, Darrell H
SEOUL/EMB/FCS:Jacobson, Douglas R
Approved By: SEOUL/EMB/EXEC:Lippert, Mark W
Released By: SEOUL:Bae, Eugene
Info: DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE* ;
DEPT OF AGRICULTURE USD FAS WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE* ; FBI WASHINGTON DC
ROUTINE ; DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE* ;
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE* ;
JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE* ; OSD WASHINGTON DC *ROUTINE*

Dissemination Rule: Archive Copy

UNCLASSIFIED
SBU