

OCI No. 1500
Copy No. 10

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
9 December 1953

RHEE AGAIN DEMANDS AMERICAN COMMITMENT TO RENEW
HOSTILITIES IN KOREA

President Rhee has apparently decided to use America's desire for a political conference as a means of forcing the United States into some new agreement, according to Ambassador Dean. After rejecting the latest UN proposal to the Communists, Rhee told Dean on 7 December that he would give the United States complete freedom in arranging the conference in return for a commitment to resume fighting after 90 days of political discussions. When informed this was impossible, Rhee accused the United States of a lack of courage in fighting the USSR, stating that "if you don't want to fight, get out." At a later meeting Foreign Minister Pyun told Dean that South Korea would not agree to the UN proposal unless the commitment were given.

Dean believes that Rhee has decided now is a better time to force the United States into fighting than after the conference convenes. He thinks that Rhee may be also using this issue to strengthen his hand in connection with the conference and in the fisheries dispute with Japan.

Comment: The Rhee-Robertson talks, at which Rhee agreed not to obstruct the armistice, failed to reach accord on what action would be taken after 90 days of political discussions. Since Rhee is under no illusions regarding US determination not to resume hostilities, particularly since President Eisenhower's letter, he has probably raised this unsettled issue in an attempt to gain new concessions. These could include a firm American commitment to build up South Korea's air and naval forces, meeting Rhee's terms on the economic aid program, prompt Senate ratification of the mutual defense treaty, or support for South Korea's position in the proposed talks with Japan.

State Dept. review completed

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