Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: July 11, 1949

SUBJECT: Korea: Military Assistance and Related Matters

PARTICIPANTS:
Dr. Pyung Ok Chough, Special Representative of the President of Korea
Dr. John K. Chang, Ambassador of Korea
The Secretary
Mr. Miles V. Banc, Assistant Chief, Division of Northeast Asian Affairs

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Department of the Army (Plane and Operations)
Ambassador Musco, Seoul.

Dr. Chough called on me by appointment this afternoon accompanied by Ambassador Chang.

He stated at the outset that he wished to express to me, personally and on behalf of his President, appreciation for the assistance which had been extended to Korea by the United States, and in particular for the strong advocacy of the Korean cause which had been evidenced by recent official statements made in support of the pending Korean Aid Bill.

Dr. Chough then stated that he had been instructed by President Roh to raise three points with me. In the first place, he stated that the Korean Government and people had been disturbed by the recent withdrawal of United States occupation forces because of what they regarded as the inadequacy of existing Korean security forces. He said that, although this concern had been somewhat alleviated by recent expressions of United States support, it continued to be the view of his Government that the effective strength of the Korean Army (i.e., the size of the force to be equipped and supplied by the United States) should be raised from the present figure of 50,000 to 100,000, with an additional reserve of 50,000. He added that he had discussed this matter with General Wedemeyer and that the latter, although originally in favor of the 65,000...
figure, was now disposed to support the larger figure. (General  
Wehman has subsequently emphatically denied ever having  
expressed himself, either to Dr. Gough or anyone else, as being  
in favor of a Korean Army of more than 65,000 men.) Dr. Gough  
was informed in reply that the question of Korea's military  
requirements was one in which we of course depended upon the  
judgment of our military authorities, whose present opinion,  
in so far as it was known to us, was that 65,000 was the optimum  
effective strength for the Korean Army.

In the second place, Dr. Gough said that his Government  
was desirous of some further public assurance on the part of  
the United States that the latter would 'stand by' the Republic  
of Korea in the event of trouble. It was pointed out to Dr.  
Gough that the Department's statement of June 3 (Press Release  
No. 429) had been designed to meet the request of the Korean  
Government for a public expression of United States support,  
and that no further statement was contemplated at this time.  
Dr. Gough replied that, while all of the recent statements of  
this Government had been most gratifying to his Government, what  
they really wanted was a specific assurance that the United  
States would come to the defense of the Republic of Korea in  
the event of an armed attack against it. He was told that, as  
he had already been informed on previous occasions, such a  
specific military commitment by the United States was out of  
the question.

The third point raised by Dr. Gough was the question of  
the possibility of the United States' underwriting a Pacific  
Fleet analogous to the North Atlantic Fleet. I pointed out in  
reply that my views on this subject had been set forth on more  
than one occasion during recent press conferences, and that,  
in brief, the United States did not at this time contemplate  
any further extension of the undertakings embodied in the  
North Atlantic Fleet.