

It was this line of reasoning which prompted high-level decision to take position reflected in May 16 noon press briefing (Deptel 1311).² This is in no sense a repudiation of public statements made May 16 by you and General Magruder, which are approved.

While it is too early to spell out U.S. course to be followed event Chang Government not restored to power, thought is being given to this question. Recommendations from Embassy would be useful.

Bowles

² In telegram 1311, May 16, the Department sent the Embassy a statement made by the Director of News, Lincoln White, at the noon briefing that day. The statement reads: "We continue to receive reports which are under study. The situation, however, is so fluid and unclear that we are unable to make substantive comment. The statements by General Magruder and Chargé d'Affaires Marshall Green were made within the scope of their authority in their posts." (Ibid., Central Files, 795B.00/5-1661)

217. Memorandum From Director of Central Intelligence Dulles to President Kennedy

Washington, May 16, 1961.

SUBJECT

CIA Korea Coup Reports dated 21 through 26 April 1961

[less than 1 line of source text not declassified] CIA commencing 21 April reported on plans for a coup d'état in Korea by Major General Pak Chong-hui as follows:

21 April—*[less than 1 line of source text not declassified]* reports that one of two existing coups to overthrow ROK Government is led by Major General Pak Chong-hui, Deputy Commanding General, Second ROK Army. The other is led by Yi Pom-sok and members of the Racial Youth Corps. Plans discussed throughout ROK Army down to and including division commanders. Army leaders look upon the present politicians as corrupt and weak and believe they have either caused or permitted situations to exist whereby the military, collectively and individually, have been hurt.

Source: Central Intelligence Agency, DCI/ER Files, Job 80–B0176R, White House, Jan.–June 1961. Secret. Drafted by *[text not declassified]* Directorate of Plans, Far East Division, *[text not declassified]*, on May 15. Sent to the White House under cover of a May 16 memorandum from J.S. Earman to Clifton.

- 21 April—[less than 1 line of source text not declassified] summary on possibility of a military coup. Definite threat exists; however, increased political stability, absence of violence and civil disorder and strengthening of the police would tend to thwart any coup attempt.
- 23 April—[less than 1 line of source text not declassified] believes there is sufficient evidence to gauge that a significant grouping exists which is actively and seriously talking and planning a coup and that the grouping is largely made up of elements which are bitter, rash, purposeful and quite capable of abrupt and violent action.
- 23 April—The plot is supported by ROK Army, student groups and reformists. Leader believed to be General Pak Chong-hui, and General So Chong-ch'ol, Commanding General of VI Military District Command is also a close supporter. Much detail contained on military supporters.
- 24 April—Views of ROK Army Chief of Staff, Chang To-yong on military plot. Chang desires arrest Pak Chong-hui but has lack of evidence. Believes arrest might trigger coup. Chang believes Racial Youth Corps and Yi Pom-sok may support coup.
- 25 April—ROK Army CIC is investigating the coup. If the coup is not attempted on 26 April, group will await a more opportune time. As of 24 April, according to Chang, Chang Myon was unaware of the coup; however, newspaper publisher planned to advise him on 25 April.
- 25 April—[less than 1 line of source text not declassified] had one-hour meeting with ROK Army Chief of Staff Chang To-yong on 24 April and told Chang that information on coup had been volunteered our office, that General Magruder would be advised at first opportunity and that thereafter General Magruder would probably discuss this matter with Chang. Chang mentioned that Pak had talked to him one week earlier. Chang states that he believes no action imminent.
- 26 April—Prime Minister Chang Myon is aware of rumors circulating to the effect that a group of malcontents within the Army may be plotting some kind of coup. He attaches little importance to these stories and believes that the situation is by no means dangerous. Chang Myon is satisfied with the performance of ROK Army Chief of Staff Chang To-yong. He believes that General Chang is forceful and able and enjoys the respect of his American counterparts. He plans to retain General Chang for a full two-year tour.

Allen W. Dulles¹

¹ Printed from a copy that indicates Dulles signed the original.