

# Koreans and Americans in Seoul Say Park Must Be Aware of Gifts

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SEOUL, South Korea, Nov. 7.—So many aides and confidants of President Park Chung Hee have been linked to cash payments to United States officials and pressing of American businessmen for contributions that certain Korean and American sources here say it is virtually impossible for the South Korean leader to have been unaware of them.

The pressuring of the Gulf Oil Corporation for \$4 million in campaign contributions to Mr. Park's ruling party, the \$10,000 cash offering to an aide of former President Richard M. Nixon and the alleged disbursement of cash-filled envelopes in Washington—all this could never have occurred without at least the tacit approval of President Park, the American and Korean sources maintain.

Seoul says that these and other cash dealings were freelance operations by individual Korean officials and businessmen for personal or financial gain. But Government spokesmen cannot explain how any of these transactions could have escaped President Park's attention, since some of them reportedly originated within his executive compound, called the Blue House.

## The \$10,000 at the Airport

Two years ago, for example, the State Department says, a South Korean official handed John C. Nidecker, a Nixon White House aide, a thick envelope as he was leaving Kimpo International Airport here. Mr. Nidecker ripped the envelope open, saw that it contained United States cash, and quickly handed it to Philip C. Habib, then the American Ambassador to South Korea and now an Under Secretary of State.

Sources here said it contained \$10,000 in large bills that Mr. Habib turned over to the chief of the United States Central Intelligence Agency station here. The C.I.A. man then reportedly carried the envelope directly to President Park's Blue House and returned it.

The Korean who handed the cash to Mr. Nidecker was Park Chong Kyu, who was then Mr. Park's chief bodyguard. His position was roughly equivalent to that of the chief of the United States Secret Service, but Korean sources said he was much more intimately involved with Mr. Park's daily affairs than all but two of three of the President's closest ministers and aides.

## Park Didn't Know, an Aide Says

Kim Seong Jin, the Minister of Information and a close Park aide, said in an interview yesterday that the President had no knowledge of his bodyguard's actions, since giving of gifts, including cash, is common among Koreans. "Perhaps Mr. Park was trying to enhance his own career by offering the envelope to Mr. Nidecker," Mr. Kim said.

"Perhaps he was simply trying to express his hospitality," Mr. Kim went on "but if the envelope did contain such large sum, it certainly was an impolitic

improper and unacceptable way of expressing it."

Korean sources that cannot be identified because of the danger of Government reprisal believe it is highly improbable that the various actions of Park Tong Sun, the Korean businessman who made cash contributions to several American Congressmen, escaped the attention of President Park.

First, these sources said, Park Tong Sun—known in the United States as Tongsun Park—was known to have personal friends among the dozens of aides within the Blue House compound and to have visited them there on trips to Seoul. Information Minister Kim insisted, however, that "there has absolutely never been any meeting in the Blue House between President Park and this man."

## Koreans Tell of Warning President

The Seoul spokesman said his Government considered Park Tong Sun just another Korean businessman. Several politicians here, however, said that as long as four years ago, they had singled out Mr. Park in National Assembly speeches and had personally warned President Park to steer clear of him, suggesting that his activities be monitored.

Park Tong Sun maintained one of the five luxury villas at Walker Hill, a gambling and partying resort just outside Seoul. On several occasions, he reportedly whisked certain American Congressmen away from official delegations straight from the airport to the villa for parties. Since Korean agents are known to shadow visiting American dignitaries, Korean sources said Mr. Park's actions would have been impossible without tacit Government approval.

Neither Korean nor diplomatic sources here can explain how he acquired the large sums of money he is said to have had available for bestowing upon Americans. His father, now dead, was a wealthy businessman here, but Park Tong Sun is said to be estranged from his brother, who operates a shipping business that includes five oil tankers that are chartered to the Gulf Oil Corporation. Park Tong Sun recently bought a shopping center and a private girls' school in Seoul.

## How Koreans View Park

Korean officials describe Park Tong Sun variously as a swindler or shady dealer and suggest that, as many Koreans do, he passed himself off to Americans and Koreans as a man who had high-level connections with both sides.

Korean officials have difficulty explaining one financial transaction that went on close to President Park. That is the solicitation of \$4 million from the Gulf Oil Corporation—\$1 million in 1966 and \$3 million in 1970—as election contributions to President Park's ruling Democratic Republican Party. Such contributions are not illegal under South Korean law.

The Korean who sought the contributions was Kim Sung Kon, a multimillionaire businessman, assemblyman and chairman of the governing party's financial committee. As such, he was an intimate of President Park.

The 1970 contribution of \$3 million was transferred from the Mellon Bank in Pittsburgh to the Union Bank of Switzerland, but there is no indication here that it ever got to South Korea. Seoul Government officials said the matter was never investigated, even though such a large donation could have hardly escaped the President's attention.

A year later, Kim Sung Kon retired from politics. He died, reportedly of a stroke, on Feb. 25, 1975, a few months before Gulf's overseas payments were made public.

Since he is dead, a Government spokesman said, there is no way to clear up the "mystery" of the Gulf payment.

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