

# S. Korea Suggests U.S. Holds Kim Against His Will

12-9-76

By John Saar

Washington Post, Foreign Service

TOKYO, Dec. 8—In an unprecipitated outburst of public anger toward the United States, South Korea today suggested that KCIA detector Kim Sang Keun is being held against his will and demanded that American authorities release him.

Kim, 43, who was the second-ranking KCIA official at the Korean embassy in Washington, is under FBI protection at an undisclosed location and reportedly is talking freely about a scheme allegedly directed by President Park Chung Hee to bribe U.S. congressmen. He refused orders to return to Seoul last month and is apparently cooperating with the FBI inquiry in return for political asylum.

"The Korean side has found no ground to believe that Counselor Kim chose to stay in the United States of his own free will as alleged by U.S. authorities," a high government official said in a prepared statement.

The protest, couched in strong language rarely used in diplomatic exchanges between friendly nations, accused the United States of ignoring repeated requests for South Korean diplomats to interview Kim and concluded with an ultimatum:

"Should the relevant authorities of the United States fail to comply with

the request for a prompt release of Counselor Kim, they will be subject to suspicion that they have placed Mr. Kim, with diplomatic status, under forced detention and will hardly avoid international criticism."

The official, who was not identified, said the U.S. government had not replied to messages sent through the usual diplomatic channels. "It has even withheld information on Counselor Kim's whereabouts, and his family has been placed under surveillance by agents of the United States authorities," he said.

Washington reports have said that Kim is under protective custody and his wife and family under precautionary guard by FBI agents.

The Seoul official's statement continued: "We cannot accept the allegations at their face values under the circumstances in which the proposed interview with Mr. Kim by the Korean Ambassador to the United States has not been realized and even the opportunity to ascertain his free will has not been accorded."

The statement was read and released to Seoul-based representatives of foreign news media today. The details were confirmed by official South Korean spokesmen in Seoul and Tokyo. The protest was not released to the South Korean news media, which

are severely limited by an emergency measure curbing criticism of the government and have made no mention of the two-month-old scandal.

Diplomatic observers in Tokyo were taken aback by the harsh tone of the Korean message and viewed it as evidence of a worsening crisis in U.S.-South Korean relations over the bribery allegations. Entirely aside from any embarrassing disclosures Kim may make to U.S. investigators, his defection is a serious blow to Korean prestige. By going public, Seoul may hope to achieve his return—something private diplomacy has failed to accomplish.

A week ago, the South Korean embassy issued a terse denial: "Counselor Kim has never asked for political asylum and he made this clear not only to us but also to the U.S. authorities."

A State Department spokesman said Kim "is seeking an adjustment in his visa status so he can remain in the United States." The terms "defection" and "political asylum" are not used in reference to the citizens of friendly countries.

Reliable South Korean sources say the statement is a calculated response to a continuing pattern of unfriendly behavior by the United States.

In two previous public pronouncements

the government denied any personal complicity by President Park and denounced The Washington Post for "malicious" reporting. But Seoul officials feel that they have had no help from Washington. For example, although the State Department has not denied or clarified reports damaging to South Korea, it has confirmed the offer of an improper \$10,000 payment to a White House aide.

Also troubling to Seoul is Washington's public silence on assertions that U.S. intelligence agents conducted surveillance on the Korean presidential Blue House—possibly even bugging and tape-recording Park's conversations. Anger has mounted, according to the sources, because revelations are supported by leaks from the investigations and therefore appear to be officially inspired.

The first hint that the scandal may cause President Park domestic difficulties occurred today, when about 500 students of Seoul's National University protested Park's repressive rule and called for a full inquiry into the allegation of a government-directed payoff scheme.

A Kyodo news service dispatch from the South Korean capital said the rally was dispersed after 30 minutes and some student leaders were arrested.