

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE WEEKLY REVIEW

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SOUTH KOREAN SITUATION

Although former South Korean President Rhee's flight to Hawaii on 29 May led some student demonstrators to demand the resignation of the government of Acting Chief of State Huh Chung and the recall of American Ambassador McConaughy, the largely negative public response to the demonstrations reflects the high degree of public support enjoyed by the provisional government and its reform program. The demonstrators were easily dispersed by other students, and still others subsequently toured Seoul proclaiming their opposition to further disturbances. When Huh was interpellated by the National Assembly regarding Rhee's departure, the questioning was not unfriendly and appeared more for the record than to harass him.

The antigovernment demonstrators may have been acting under the influence of opportunistic radical elements. Encouraged by the new air of political freedom since Rhee's ouster, a number of small leftist and neofascist political parties have sprung to life. Such groups, however, appear unlikely to become a major political influence in the near future, although they may receive considerable support in the larger cities in the elections for a new National Assembly expected to be held next month.

With the approach of the elections, Huh may find it increasingly difficult to maintain orderly processes of government. Muckraking involving persons formerly and still in the government service has in-

creased and appears likely to continue. Although Huh seems determined to prevent the irresponsible ouster of qualified government personnel, exploitation by political aspirants of popular resentments against the Rhee regime might force him to expand the purge of civil and military officials tainted by association with the old government.

Recognizing the stabilizing role of the army, Huh has given strong indication of desiring to curtail the ouster of top military officers so as to minimize the adverse effect of command changes on army capabilities. However, General Paek Son-yop has submitted his resignation as chairman of the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the ouster of other senior officers appears likely. The June graduation of senior officers from the advanced military schools, usually a time of large-scale reassignments, offers the occasion for such politically inspired personnel changes.

The new army chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Choe Yong-hui, is the former commanding general of the South Korean Army training command and has had wide command and combat experience. He has attended the Command and General Staff School at Ft. Leavenworth and is believed to be strongly pro-American. However, he has been involved in numerous shady financial transactions and in this respect does not inspire confidence.

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Approved for Release

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