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SECTION 2 (EASTERN)

1. KOREA. Rhee declares he will not run for re-election: President Rhee wrote to an American correspondent that he will not be a candidate for re-election next June, according to Ambassador Muccio. Rhee's advisers had urged the President to hedge his statement, but he answered that his life expectancy was short and that the Korean people "may as well face up to the problem (of his successor) now."

Ambassador Muccio comments that forecasts of Rhee's future political moves are highly speculative; the weight of evidence, however, still points to the conclusion that he will only step down from the presidency if forced to by circumstances beyond his control. [REDACTED]

Comment: Rhee has issued similar statements at times when a political crisis was brewing in order to discomfit his opposition and to rally popular support. Probably Rhee will not consider himself definitely bound by such a statement if he can point to popular demand for his re-election.

2. North Koreans plan for procedures in case of cease-fire: The principal North Korean political and military leaders met at General Headquarters on 12 February to discuss developments following a cease-fire. [REDACTED]

The group decided that when a cease-fire took place North Korean troops would be withdrawn north of the 39th parallel for rest and reorganization. In preparation for the withdrawal of the Chinese Communists, North Korean army strength would be raised to 20 divisions and all physically fit males under 37 years old would be inducted "prior to 30 April 1952." [REDACTED]

Comment: Such a meeting, if it actually occurred, would indicate that leading North Korean officials are anticipating a conclusion of the truce talks. Previous reports have advanced the thesis that the North Korean army would withdraw from contact preparatory to a reorganization following a cease-fire. The level of recruitment in manpower-short North Korea seems to have long passed the stage where only physically fit males under 35 years old are to be drafted.

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