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March 24, 1951

Mr. Lovett telephoned the Secretary at 9:20 this morning and said that he had been with the Joint Chiefs of Staff for about an hour discussing the MacArthur statement. The JCS had divided the problem into three parts.

The first part related to the embarrassment with the 13 countries occasioned by MacArthur's statement at the time this Government was negotiating with the 13 countries to agree on a proposed statement by President Truman.

The second problem which this statement created was its effect in complicating any US proposals looking toward a settlement. It brought up the question again of how many negotiators there are; i.e., whether the State Department, the United Nations or MacArthur was the negotiator.

The third problem was the matter of military discipline. The JCS had decided to address themselves solely to that question at the present. They were considering it in the light of the directive of December 5 which had been sent to MacArthur, among others. That directive specifically requires the Commander in the field to clear any statements, speeches, or anything else relating to political matters with Washington. They were also considering it in connection with the March 20 announcement of the President's intentions with relation to Korea (which Mr. Lovett said he thought was a remarkably fine succinct pronouncement.

In the light of these two clear statements, it would be perfectly obvious if it were anybody else who had made the statement which MacArthur made yesterday, he would be relieved of his command at once. However, the JSC recognized that the consequences of relieving MacArthur are startling. It would have its effect at once in the field and it would probably prejudice the success of the Japanese peace treaty negotiations. He said there were other compelling considerations also. On the other hand, they do not feel that they can just let this slide by.

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E. O. 11652, Sec. 1(b) and 2(D) or (E)

Dept. of State letter, Aug. 9, 1973

By NLE: H, NARS Date: 2/2/76

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Their thinking at the present moment is that they will try to work out a reprimand rather than a relief. Mr. Lovett said he thought this was sound judgment. He pointed out that one of the complicating factors was that MacArthur at the present time held four separate commands -- i.e., SCAP, Commander in Chief of UN Forces, Commander in Chief in the Far East, and Commanding General of the Army Forces in the Far East. To recall MacArthur would break up this multiplicity of commands and cause great logistical difficulties.

Mr. Lovett said that he had a personal hunch as to what would be the reaction and the best way to deal with it. He said everything that he had read in the press this morning, and he had read all the press, indicated that this was probably the most popular public statement anyone has ever made. It is very clever, it is an encouraging statement (Mr. Lovett thought unjustifiably encouraging), it offers peace and holds out the hope of getting out of Korea. If the President challenged it, he would be in the position at once of being on the side of sin. MacArthur has gotten us in Washington in a tight box from which there seems to be no escape. Mr. Lovett thought that probably the best thing would be to have as much silence as possible about it. He therefore agreed that there should be some sort of a reprimand, that generally questions about it should be met with "no comment", and the State Department would have to take the position with the other Governments of trying to persuade them that this does not represent Government policy, that this was another statement made by the field commander and that it is really not very important. Mr. Lovett said he recognized the very great difficulties of such a program.

Mr. Acheson said that the State Department people had separated the problem in about the same way, but of course, the disciplinary problem is not for the State Department to deal with. We are concerned here with trying to get a means of dealing with it so that the same thing is not going to happen again. If this statement can be straightened out that will not do much good if the same thing is apt to happen next week. He read to Mr. Lovett a possible statement by a Department spokesman. He said we would then have to get in the 13 Ambassadors and say that the MacArthur statement was unauthorized, unexpected, and that steps had been taken to deal with it.

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E. O. 12958, Sec. 3(E) and 3(D) or (F)

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Mr. Acheson and Mr. Lovett agreed that Mr. Acheson should call the President telling him how the two Departments were thinking about the problem and say that they would try to meet with the latter part of the morning with some affirmative suggestions.

Mr. Lovett telephoned the Secretary again about 10:30 to say that the Joint Chiefs and he had a suggested telegram to MacArthur. This message, he said, takes into account the fact that MacArthur's course of action might be carried out and he could then say that in spite of restrictions placed upon him, he had "made a touchdown". Mr. Lovett said also that the JCS did not, either individually or collectively to attend a meeting at the White House. This message represented their military judgment and they preferred to leave all political considerations up to the Secretary and the President.

It was agreed Mr. Lovett would bring this Message to Mr. Acheson's office at 11 o'clock, they would discuss it and go about 11:30 to see the President.

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