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I. United States

1. DPRK Underground Construction

Reuters ("NORTH KOREA, U.S. CLOSE TO RESOLVING NUCLEAR ROW - PAPER," Tokyo, 02/01/99) reported that the Japanese newspaper Sankei Shimbun on Monday quoted unnamed sources close to

the negotiations as saying that the DPRK and the US are likely to resolve a dispute over the DPRK's underground construction site later this month. The report said that the DPRK was likely to agree to allow multiple inspections of the facility in return for large-scale food aid and a partial lifting of economic sanctions.

2. US-DPRK Summit Rumors

Reuters ("NORTH KOREA DENIES PROPOSING SUMMIT WITH UNITED STATES," Tokyo, 02/01/99) reported that the DPRK on Monday denied a report in Japan's Sankei Shimbun newspaper last month that the DPRK last year proposed a summit meeting between its leader Kim Jong-il and US President Bill Clinton. The Japanese paper had quoted US diplomatic sources as saying that the DPRK had asked the US last spring to send its presidential aircraft Air Force One to pick up Kim and take him to Washington for a meeting with Clinton. The newspaper said that the US ignored the proposal on the grounds that there was no precedent for dispatching the presidential aircraft on such a mission and because the agenda proposed by the DPRK coincided with that of peace talks already taking place. A spokesman for the DPRK Foreign Ministry said in a dispatch carried by the Korean Central News Agency, "The report is virtually false." He added, "Up to this date the hostile relations between the DPRK and the US remain unchanged, with the US still pursuing the hostile policy toward the DPRK. So, we have had no idea of having summit talks between the DPRK and the US."

3. Remains of US Soldiers from Korean War

Pacific Stars And Stripes (Jim Lea, "6 SEARCHES FOR REMAINS SLATED FOR ’99," Seoul, 01/02/99, 3) reported that Alan Liotta, deputy director of the US Department of Defense's POW/MIA office, said that the US will send six missions to the DPRK this year to search for the remains of US servicemen killed during the Korean War. The first of the 25-day missions will begin in February in an area north of Pyongyang not far from the PRC border. Liotta said that the missions will be held about four weeks apart. The US government has agreed to pay the DPRK US$600,000 for expenses the Korean People's Army incurred in the five missions conducted last year. Liotta said that last December’s negotiation with the DPRK "was the most workmanlike of all the negotiations we've had. (They) completely avoided any political rhetoric. We spent almost every day in negotiations from morning to evening." He also said that the DPRK has gradually increased its cooperation over the three years the joint operations have been conducted. He stated, "Until now we’ve been limited to 10 people. This year, we'll have 14." He added that the extra four people will make up an "investigation team" to go into the country in advance of the excavation teams to interview witnesses, survey sites, and pinpoint burial locations. He said that the DPRK is also continuing to open its military archives to help in locating where MIAs may be buried, but has continued to refuse interviews of US defectors living in the DPRK, denying the defectors' existence. Liotta stated, "We know there were five, but one died. They’re just not ready to open up on that, yet." He added, "The great thing is that there’s been a grudging respect for the American soldiers. Our guys are sharing food and water with their guys. (Now) it's just a bunch of guys working together at the site." [Ed. note: This article appeared in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for February 1.]

4. DPRK Famine

The Chicago Tribune ("UN OFFICIAL CALLS FOR DEVELOPMENT AID TO END FAMINE," 01/31/99) and the Washington Post (Michael Laris, "U.N. OFFICIAL: N. KOREA'S FAMINE IS WORSENING," Beijing, 01/31/99, A25) reported that David Morton, the UN Humanitarian

Coordinator in the DPRK, said in Beijing on Saturday that famine will persist in the DPRK if more is not done to revive the country's rural economy. Morton stated, "If famine is defined as an acute scarcity of food, then in North Korea, for most people, famine is a reality." He said that in the schools and hospitals he has visited, 25 percent of teachers, doctors, nurses and other staff have left their positions. He stated, "When you ask why, the explanation will be given usually that, well, they have asked for time off to go and secure food for their families." He added that humanitarian aid is keeping the situation from worsening, but a reluctance by donor nations to supply development aid is hampering efforts to fix the economy. Morton said that, among other things, the DPRK needs seeds, fuel, and raw materials to resume fertilizer production and irrigation equipment to replace old systems.

5. Alleged DPRK Work Camps

Reuters ("SEOUL: 22 SOUTH KOREANS HELD IN NORTH KOREAN WORK CAMPS," Seoul, 02/01/99) reported that the ROK National Intelligence Service (NIS) said Monday that at least 22 ROK citizens are being held in DPRK concentration camps. The agency said that the inmates were defectors or victims of kidnapping and had been confined within one or two years of arrival in the DPRK. It added that, of the 22, it had confirmed the identities of 15 and when they were taken to the DPRK, and it was in the process of confirming the identities of the remaining seven. The NIS said that the ROK government would press the DPRK to provide details of the detainees, and would call for investigations by the UN Human Rights Commission and Amnesty International. It gave no details on how the information was obtained, but local newspapers reported that the NIS confirmed the detentions during the interrogation of DPRK citizens who had recently defected to the ROK.

6. Mt. Kumgang Tour Project

The Associated Press ("SHIP DENIED ENTRY TO NORTH KOREA," Seoul, 01/31/99) reported that a Hyundai cruise ship carrying 750 ROK citizens on a visit to the DPRK's Mt. Kumgang was denied entry for 12 hours on Sunday. The ship's operator said that the ship was forced to stay in international waters until it was finally given an entry permit by DPRK authorities. Among the passengers were Park Jie-won, chief press secretary to ROK President Kim Dae- jung, and a few dozen reporters assigned to cover the presidential office. ROK government officials said that Park's presence does not appear to have caused the delay, which they attributed to Hyundai's failure to remit its second scheduled payment of US$25 million by the end of January.

7. DPRK Defectors

The Associated Press ("N. KOREAN COUPLE DEFECTS TO SOUTH," Seoul, 01/30/99) reported that a DPRK couple, Lee Keun-soo and Lee Kyo-soon, arrived in Seoul on Saturday seeking asylum. The ROK National Intelligence Service said that Lee Keun-soo had worked as a carpenter while Lee Kyo-soon worked at a spinning mill until they escaped in July to a "third country." The couple brought to 19 the number of DPRK defectors so far this year.

8. DPRK Reaction to Japanese Satellite Development

The Associated Press ("N. KOREA SAYS JAPAN SATELLITE PLANS PUT COUNTRIES NEAR WAR," Tokyo, 02/01/99) reported that the DPRK's Central Radio on Monday accused Japan of bringing the two nations on the brink of war by pursuing plans to build spy satellites and a missile defense system. The DPRK's Korean Asia-Pacific Peace Committee was quoted as saying, "North Korean-

Japanese relations have deteriorated, and if this leads to a military confrontation, Japan itself will be the one destroyed." Meanwhile, the Communist Party-run Rodong newspaper said in an editorial Monday, "Japanese reactionaries...are using the 'missile threat' as an excuse to arm their country with nuclear weapons, turn it into a military power and complete preparations for war." It added, "What they really want is to achieve their ambition of re-invading" the Korean peninsula.

9. US-Japan Defense Cooperation

Agence France Presse ("JAPAN-US DEFENCE AXIS AT RISK IF LAW NOT PASSED," Tokyo, 01/27/99) reported that Akitaka Saiki, deputy press secretary to Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi, said on Tuesday that the credibility of Japan-US defense cooperation is at risk because of political disputes over legislation to implement the new cooperation guidelines. Saiki stated, "This Bill was submitted to Parliament in April last year and ... has gone through three Diet sessions. We had better ask the Diet to really look at this Bill quickly." Saiki said that debate has become tortured, with the opposition questioning what would happen if Japanese troops were to provide a supporting role to a hypothetical future UN-multinational force. He added, "There will be some difficulty in having the Bill passed in the Upper House."

10. PRC-Taiwan Relations

Reuters ("NO 'TAIWAN ISSUE', SAYS TAIPEI," Taipei, 01/30/99) reported that Chang King-yuh, head of the Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council, on Friday rejected a statement by PRC Vice-Premier Qian Qichen, who had said a day earlier that the "Taiwan problem" could not be put aside forever. Chang stated, "There is no so-called Taiwan issue between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait." He said that there is only "the issue of how the two sides can promote their relations under a reasonable, peaceful, reciprocal and equal basis." He added that Taiwan agrees it must unite with the PRC, but only under the principle of full democracy, freedom and the even distribution of wealth. Qian had said on Thursday, "With Hong Kong returned and Macau to come back on December 20, the Taiwan problem cannot be drawn out indefinitely." Qian added, "We call on the Taiwan authorities to carry out political negotiation at an early date. Under the principle of 'one China', we should formally end the state of hostility across the Taiwan Strait."

11. PRC-Taiwan Diplomatic Rivalry

The South China Morning Post ("TAIWAN SCORES WIN WITH NEW BALKANS LINK," 01/28/99) and CNN ("DIPLOMATIC SPAT LOOMS AS TAIWAN ESTABLISHES TIES WITH MACEDONIA," Taipei, 01/27/99) reported that Taiwan on Tuesday established diplomatic ties with the former Yugoslavia state of Macedonia. Foreign Minister Jason Hu Chih-chiang stated, "We value our relations with Macedonia and we will devote energy to make it a bridge to improve our ties with Europe." Hu added that Taiwan had to continue its flexible foreign policy "for the benefit of the 21 million people on the island." Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui told Macedonian Foreign Minister Aleksandar Dimitrov, "The opening of diplomatic relations has started a new page in our relations." Dimitrov stated, "We are ready to continue co-operation and relations with [the PRC] and we will accept any possible solution from that side." He added that Macedonia would support Taiwan's efforts to join global groups, including the UN. The PRC Foreign Ministry responded, "We resolutely oppose any nation with which we have relations developing official relations with Taiwan."

Agence France Presse ("TAIWAN FIGHTS TO KEEP AFRICAN ALLIES," Taipei, 01/25/99) reported that Taiwan has vowed to send more top officials to Africa to counter new diplomatic efforts by the

PRC to induce African countries to sever ties with Taiwan. The Taiwan Foreign Ministry said in a statement on January 23, "The Foreign Ministry will keep dispatching senior government officials to our allies in Africa to counter waves of diplomatic attempts by Chinese communists." It maintained that "ties with the eight African allies are on a steady track." The statement's release coincided with a trip by Chiang Pin-kung, head of Taiwan's Council for Economic Planning and Development, to Senegal and Gambia.

12. PRC Military Modernization

Agence France Presse ("BEIJING SEEKS TO UPGRADE MILITARY WEAPONS," Beijing, 01/26/99) reported that the PRC's official Xinhua news agency said that the PRC has made high-technology weapons the focus of its efforts to modernize the military. It added that PRC President Jiang Zemin signed 13 "operational regulations" for the military recently which covered combat rules and logistic support for the army, navy and air force, and their joint operations. The report cited military sources as saying, "The promulgation of the new military operational rules indicates that the Chinese military has reached a new understanding of today's regional wars which are characterized by modern high technologies."

13. US Military in Philippines

European Stars And Stripes ("PHILIPPINES CONSIDERS U.S. FORCES," Manila, 02/01/99, 2) reported that Philippines President Joseph Estrada on Sunday urged senators to ratify the Visiting Forces Agreement to allow US military exercises in the country. Estrada cited recent PRC construction on Mischief Reef in the Spratly chain of islands in the South China Sea and said a strong military alliance between the Philippines and the US would "balance power in all of Asia." He added that if the accord is ratified, the US might agree to provide military assistance later. Senator Blas Ople, chairman of the Senate foreign affairs committee, has said that the Senate might reject the agreement if the US does not guarantee it will come to the aid of the Philippines in any military confrontation with the PRC over the Spratlys. [Ed. note: This article appeared in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for February 1.]

14. South Asian Nuclear Weapons

The Associated Press ("INDIA, PAKISTAN SHOW NEW WILLINGNESS ON NUKES," New Delhi, 02/01/99) reported that anonymous US and Indian officials said on Monday that India agreed to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) provided the US lifts economic sanctions. Pakistani Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmed meanwhile, in a statement issued upon the arrival of US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott from India, said, "We are not aiming at any signed agreements, as none are required." He added, however, that Pakistan is "hopeful of a very constructive and productive round of talks." During his 24-hour visit to Pakistan, Talbott was scheduled to meet Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and hold talks with the foreign secretary. Talbott will also address the Institute of Strategic Studies on Tuesday.

II. Republic of Korea

1. ROK-US Policy Consultations

Korea Times ("ROK, US REAFFIRM ENGAGEMENT POLICY FOR DPRK," Seoul, 01/29/99) reported

that the ROK and the US recently confirmed their commitment to pursuing a policy of engagement toward the DPRK in a series of policy talks in Washington. The confirmation came in the course of meetings since Wednesday of Lim Dong- won, a top security advisor to ROK President Kim Dae-jung, with US government officials, Chong Wa Dae officials said. The US officials contacted by Lim, senior presidential secretary for diplomacy and national security, included William Perry, US coordinator on DPRK affairs, National Security Advisor Sandy Berger, and Undersecretary of State Thomas Pickering. The talks focused primarily on President Kim's "Sunshine Policy" toward the DPRK, which the US government endorsed, aides to Lim were quoted as reporting to Chong Wa Dae. The result of the ROK-US official consultations on DPRK policies are expected to figure heavily in a report Perry will submit to President Clinton and the US Congress next month, they said. Lim conveyed the ROK government's stance that the US should ease economic sanctions on the DPRK and normalize diplomatic ties with the DPRK on the basis of the reconfirmed engagement policy, the officials said.

2. Kim Jong-il's Visit to PRC

Korea Herald ("PRC HOPES FOR DPRK LEADER KIM JONG-IL'S STATE VISIT," Seoul, 02/01/99) reported that the PRC ambassador to the ROK said on Sunday that he expects DPRK leader Kim Jong-il to visit the PRC in the near future. Ambassador Wu Dawei made the remarks on a KBS-TV program Sunday morning. His remarks followed a report by a Tokyo-based news agency that the PRC and the DPRK are working on plans for Kim to visit the PRC during the first half of this year. The Kyodo News Agency said Friday that the PRC government invited Kim Jong-il in October last year to visit the PRC. The invitation was reportedly made one month after he was reelected to the powerful post of chairman of the National Defense Commission. Quoting an unnamed diplomatic source in Seoul, the news agency said that the PRC and the DPRK, which had been preparing for Kim's visit in October last year, decided to delay the visit for unspecified domestic reasons. On the TV program, Ambassador Wu also referred to rumors that a crisis could develop on the Korean Peninsula in connection with the suspicion that the DPRK is building a suspect nuclear facility in violation of its 1994 agreement with the US. He played down the rumors, noting that tension is easing between the ROK and the DPRK. He also noted that the ROK is implementing a new policy and that new developments are appearing in the DPRK.

3. Mt. Kumgang Tour Project

JoongAng Ilbo ("KUMGANG SHIP DETAINED BY DPRK FOR 12 HOURS," Seoul, 01/31/99) reported that Hyundai's Kumgang cruise ship with 690 passengers aboard, including Park Jie-won, top press aide to President Kim Dae-jung, was detained for 12 hours by DPRK authorities in open waters on January 31. Apparently the DPRK was sending a signal to Hyundai Group, the tour's operator, that it was unhappy with delays in Hyundai's scheduled payments to the DPRK as compensation for allowing the Mt. Kumgang tour program. An ROK government source commented, "The payment problem is not the sole reason. Judging from the DPRK's staging of the protest at the very time when the highest-ranking government official, the president's chief spokesperson, was visiting the DRRK, the DPRK is expressing dissatisfaction with the ROK government's attitude and policy with the DPRK." Earlier on January 30, the DPRK criticized the ROK by broadcasting that if the Mt. Kumgang tour is stopped, the ROK government will solely be to blame.

4. ROK POWs in DPRK

Korea Herald ("GOVERNMENT TO SEEK INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE IN REPATRIATING POWS IN DPRK," Seoul, 01/30/99) reported that the ROK government will seek cooperation from the

international community to repatriate former soldiers still being held prisoners of war in the DPRK for over 45 years since the Korean War. It will also help escaping POWs from the DPRK and give financial and other support to them and their families, an official of a government POW Commission said. The decisions were made at the first meeting of the commission, headed by Vice Defense Minister Ahn Byoung-gil. Based on reports by returning soldiers from the DPRK, government authorities in November estimated that at least 136 war prisoners, now mostly in their 60s or 70s, have been confirmed alive in the DPRK. However, based on other information and estimates, the figure is expected to be in the thousands. The ROK has repeatedly called for their repatriation, but has received only negative responses from the DPRK. The ROK and the US late last year started talks on joint efforts to repatriate ROK prisoners of war and the remains of ROK and US soldiers killed during the Korean War.

5. ROK Political Prisoners

JoongAng Ilbo ("GOVERNMENT TO RELEASE NON-CONVERTS ON MARCH 1," Seoul, 01/31/99) reported that the ROK Ministry of Justice announced on January 31 that it will release 17 political prisoners who have not submitted letters of intent to obey ROK law and who have family members in the DPRK. Accordingly, all 17 "non-converts," who have renounced the ROK government's condition that they sign a letter stating that they will obey the laws and not engage in activities that threaten the state, will likely be released on March 1 as part of a general amnesty. It has come to light that Park Sang-chun, the minister of justice, met with President Kim Dae-jung on January 29 and received the approval. A source at the government said, "Those `non-converts' could not help but refuse to submit their letters of intent to obey ROK law, because they are very concerned about family members in the DPRK. The government decided to release them from a humanitarian point of view."

The NAPSNet Daily Report aims to serve as a forum for dialogue and exchange among peace and security specialists. Conventions for readers and a list of acronyms and abbreviations are available to all recipients. For descriptions of the world wide web sites used to gather information for this report, or for more information on web sites with related information, see the collection of other NAPSNet resources.
We invite you to reply to today's report, and we welcome commentary or papers for distribution to the network.

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