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I. United States

1. ROK Aid to DPRK

The Associated Press ("SOUTH KOREA GROUPS' AID SHIPMENT LEAVES FOR N KOREA," Seoul, 1/3/01) reported that a cargo ship left the ROK for the DPRK on Wednesday with the first shipment of private ROK aid goods this year, including food, goats and karaoke machines. Donated by religious and civic groups, the shipment includes clothes, goats, flour, disposable medical syringes and boxes of notebooks and pencils for children. ROK religious and civic groups have donated to the DPRK aid worth US\$97 million since 1995, including US\$35 million last year.

2. Cross-Straits "Mini-Links"

Agence France Presse ("U.S. PLEASED WITH NEW LINKS BETWEEN CHINA AND TAIWAN," Washington, 1/3/01) reported that US State Department spokesman Richard Boucher welcomed Taiwan's decision on January 2 to open direct trade, travel and postal links from two islands to the PRC. Boucher said, "We believe that improving cross-Straits economic ties serves the interests of Taiwan and the People's Republic of China. We also believe it is conducive to peace and security."

Agence France Presse ("BEIJING SLAMS TAIWAN MINI-LINKS AS INADEQUATE, DISCRIMINATORY," Beijing, 1/03/01) reported that the PRC criticized the "mini-links" with Taiwan

on Wednesday as inadequate and discriminatory. Xu Shiquan, a leading Chinese policy expert on Taiwan, told the English-language China Daily, "The so-called 'mini-three links' proposal is an utterly inadequate measure" for boosting cross-Strait economic and trade ties. Xu protested that the links did not include traffic by mainland vessels to the outlying islands, saying the policy was a "unilateral discriminatory move" by the Taiwan authorities. Xu said the move was mainly a ploy by the Taiwanese authorities to defuse both growing calls in Taiwan to establish full direct links with the mainland as well as the increasing pressure from the international community to lift the long-standing trade and transport ban. The daily said that Xu's comments could be interpreted as an "official" PRC reaction to the links. In Taiwan, however, Chen Chi-mai of the ruling pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party said that the PRC's dissatisfaction with the scheme reflected its determination to refuse to allow Taiwan "to play the biggest role in cross-Strait ties."

II. Republic of Korea

1. DPRK's New Year Message

The Korea Herald (Kim Ji-ho, "PYONGYANG'S NEW YEAR MESSAGE PUTS FIRST PRIORITY ON ECONOMY," Seoul, 01/03/01) reported that ROK officials and analysts said Tuesday that the DPRK has said in a New Year's message that it would place its top policy priority on rebuilding its economy. In the message, which came in the form of joint editorials by three official newspapers on Monday, the DPRK said, "Nothing is more important for us today than to consolidate the national economic power." The three media outlets representing the ruling party, military and youth groups then cited developing up-to-date technologies and building of infrastructure as key agenda for its economic reconstruction. "Given the moves, North Korea will likely become more active in pushing for joint projects with the South," said a senior ROK Unification Ministry official.

2. DPRK-US Relations

The Korea Herald (Oh Young-jin, "HARDLINE US MIGHT BRING KOREAS CLOSER," Seoul, 01/03/01) reported that a proposed visit by DPRK leader Kim Jong-il to Seoul might be delayed amid signs of an impasse in inter-Korean cooperation efforts, but the prospects for the inter-Korean visit are not as dark as anticipated. "North Korean leader Kim might not come in April as widely expected," a government official said. In a recent meeting with the press, President Kim Dae-jung said that efforts will be made to fix the date of Kim Jong-il's visit to Seoul as soon as possible this year. At the same time, the DPRK is putting out feelers to the new US administration amid speculation that it will be harder to deal with than the outgoing Clinton administration, as part of efforts to prepare its strategy for handling the US. "If the U.S. proves to be as hard-line as it fears, a possibility is that it could turn more to Seoul as part of its continued effort to get out of diplomatic isolation," the official said. The ROK was disappointed over outgoing US President Bill Clinton's decision not to go to Pyongyang, which, if it had been realized, would have pushed the inter-Korean relationship several steps forward. Making it more cautious is a forecast that the incoming Bush administration will likely apply a more strict set of reciprocity principles, which could put the brakes on a fast normalization of the relationship with the DPRK.

3. ROK-PRC Relations

The Korea Herald (Son Key-young, "2001 EXPECTED TO BECOME YEAR OF CHALLENGES FOR KOREA-CHINA TIES," Seoul, 01/03/01) reported that this year is set to become a year of challenges

for ROK-PRC ties, as the ROK is seeking to get rid of the two major irritants to bilateral relations: the resumption of direct air flights between Seoul and Taipei and the visit to Seoul by the exiled Tibetan leader, the Dalai Lama. "Such challenges will test the solidity of Seoul-Beijing ties and, if the two countries successfully resolve the two issues, the development of their relations will be put on the right track," an ROK government official said on Tuesday.

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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