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In today's Report:

I. United States

1. Assessment of Korean Situation
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3. DPRK-Taiwan Nuclear Waste Deal

II. Republic of Korea

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4. ROK President Appoints New Prime Minister

I. United States

1. Assessment of Korean Situation

The Associated Press (George Gedda, "KOREA PEACE PROCESS ASSESSED," Washington, 3/1/97) reported that US officials said Monday that the Clinton administration believes the DPRK will not be prepared to enter into formal peace talks with the ROK at least until this summer, even if the preliminary "briefing" this week in New York on the US-ROK proposal for four-party peace talks goes well. US State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns told reporters that at the briefing US and ROK officials "intend to explain our ideas concerning the goals of the four-party talks, and we want to propose arrangements for the negotiating process options for the negotiating process itself. We hope it does provide the North Koreans with sufficient information that they will want to accept this proposal nearly one year after it was made." Later, a senior official speaking on the condition of anonymity said that the DPRK crossed a major political hurdle by agreeing to sit at the same table with the ROK, the first time that will happen since the Korean armistice was signed 44 years ago. But the senior official expressed doubt that the DPRK will be ready to move quickly to the peace table. Even if the DPRK commits itself to peace talks, Pyongyang probably will not agree to begin negotiations until after July when important party meetings are scheduled and the country will observe the third anniversary of the death of their longti

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negotiations until after July when important party meetings are scheduled and the country will observe the third anniversary of the death of their longtime leader, Kim Il-sung.

2. DPRK Ready to Burn More KEDO Fuel

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("TWO MORE N. KOREA PLANTS READIED TO BURN KEDO FUEL OIL," New York, 3/3/97) reported that a US official speaking on the condition of anonymity said that a technical team is expected to complete work this month that will allow two additional DPRK power plants to begin burning fuel oil supplied by the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO). The US-led team was dispatched to the DPRK on February 22 to install fuel-oil consumption meters at the Sunchon and East Pyongyang plants after the DPRK requested the two sites be added to a list of other facilities in the country that now burn KEDO-supplied fuel, the official said. A separate KEDO team comprised mainly of ROK nationals entered the DPRK over the weekend to begin surveying a site for the proposed light-water reactors.

3. DPRK-Taiwan Nuclear Waste Deal

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("NORTH KOREA DEFENDS NUCLEAR WASTE DEAL WITH TAIWAN," United Nations, 3/3/97) reported that the DPRK Monday brushed aside ROK charges that its plan to store nuclear waste from Taiwan poses a severe environmental threat to the Korean peninsula, claiming the South has endangered life on the peninsula by permitting the US to deploy nuclear weapons in the ROK. "The South Korean authorities gave consent to the deployment of US nuclear weapons, thus turning South Korea into a nuclear weapon storage and threatening the very existence of life on the Korean peninsula in particular and the region in general," the DPRK mission to the United Nations said in a statement. "They have also been disposing of nuclear wastes at random with a result that the ecosystem of the Korean peninsula is being devastated," the statement said.

II. Republic of Korea

1. DPRK Warning to Japan

The DPRK warned Monday that it would be in Japan's interest to reconsider pursuing a joint US-Japan theater missile defense (TMD) system development project. The warning was made by an unidentified spokesman of the DPRK Foreign Ministry, through the DPRK's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), in response to recent remarks by Japan's vice defense minister that his government would continue to pursue the joint TMD system development project. The DPRK spokesman called Japan's insistence on obtaining a TMD system "a risky military plan" that reveals the intention of conservative Japanese forces to modernize its military with US defense money. He stated that Japan was using the excuse of a potential DPRK missile attack to realize its ambition to become a military power at the cost of regional stability and peace. The spokesman was quoted as saying that if Japan sticks to the TMD system project, it will further intensify the arms race in Northeast Asia. (Korea Times, "NK WARNS AGAINST JAPAN'S ROLE IN TMD PROJECT," 03/03/97)

2. Hwang Defection

The Joongang Ilbo reported yesterday that Hwang Jang-yop, secretary of the DPRK Workers' Party, had originally planned to defect to the ROK with four other high-ranking DPRK officials. A diplomatic source in Seoul said, "Secretary Hwang tried to defect to the South together with four other high-ranking DPRK officials including Yoo Chang-shik, former secretary of the DPRK Workers' party, but only Hwang succeeded in defecting." The source also said that the plans of the four officials were exposed and they were arrested by DPRK authorities after Hwang's defection. However the source

did not reveal the identities of the other three officials. (Joong Ang Ilbo , "FOUR HIGH RANKING NORTH KOREANS HAD ATTEMPTED TO DEFECT WITH SECRETARY HWANG," 03/03/97)

The DPRK, threatening to take retaliatory measures over secretary Hwang Jang-yop's testimony that the late DPRK leader Kim Il-sung died from a heart attack during a quarrel with his son Kim Jong-il, issued a statement saying, "It is a frontal attack against our system, and is accepted as a declaration of war against our republic." DPRK authorities also referred to the article published in The Joong-Ang Ilbo which reported Hwang's testimony and said, "As South Korea has dared to incite us with fire, we have no option but to respond with fire as well," and added, "We will show no mercy and punish anyone who damages the authority of our revolutionary leadership, regardless of whether they are the main offender or the behind-the-scene manipulators." (Joong Ang Ilbo, "NORTH KOREA THREATENS RETALIATION AGAINTS THE JOONG ANG ILBO," Seoul, 03/03/97)

3. ROK Military Procurement Dilemma

The ROK's military is facing a major conundrum concerning one of its big ticket procurement projects: whether or not to continue its advanced jet training aircraft development program, code-named, "KTX-2." Following a four-year preliminary design phase that has cost 43 billion won, the KTX-2 project's feasibility is under scrutiny. The fate of the 1.2 trillion won program now depends on the outcome of a six-month study, due to be released later this month, conducted by the Korea Development Institute, a government research organization. Regardless of the KDI recommendations, there are certain to be repercussions if the project is scrapped. Proponents claim that the advanced trainer development plan is indispensable not only militarily but also in terms of fostering a strategic industry. Samsung Aerospace, a subsidiary of the business group and a leading parts subcontractor, has canceled its plans to develop mid-sized passenger aircraft and is now betting heavily on KTX-2 production. This also makes the project the ROK's only avenue left to develop its own jet aircraft, whether civilian or military. (Korea Times, "KTX-2 TRAINER JET PROGRAM POSES MAJOR CONUNDRUM FOR BUDGET-CONSCIOUS ROK MILITARY," 03/03/97)

4. ROK President Appoints New Prime Minister

ROK President Kim Young-sam is likely to name Koh Kun, president of Myongji University, as the new Prime Minister tomorrow. A cabinet reshuffle will take place the day after tomorrow after the National Assembly carries out a motion on his appointment. According to a high-ranking government source, President Kim has recently met with Koh two times to ask him to be the new prime minister, a proposal which Koh has accepted. Koh had already stated his intention to resign as the president of Myongji University. Lee Sang-deuk, chief policy maker of the ruling New Korea Party, and NKP Representative Kang Kyung-shik are being touted as the successors to Han Seung-soo, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economy. (Joong Ang Ilbo, "PRESIDENT KIM LIKELY TO APPOINT MYONGJI UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT KOH KUN AS NEW PRIME MINISTER," 03/03/97)

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We invite you to reply to today's report, and we welcome commentary or papers for distribution to the network.

Produced by the Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development.

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