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I. United States

1. Four-Party Peace Talks Briefing Postponement

US State Department Spokesman Nicholas Burns ("STATE DEPARTMENT NOON BRIEFING, FEB. 4," USIA Transcript, 2/5/97) replied to a question referring to a February 4 Washington Post article that quoted an unnamed US official as saying that the DPRK is insisting that, before it will attend

peace talks, the US must underwrite its grain purchase from Cargill Inc. (which is currently being negotiated). Burns said: "Well, I think the North Koreans are looking for a more active role by the United States Government in these negotiations. Frankly, we're not going to get involved. We don't get involved in commercial transactions." [Ed. note: For a summary of the Washington Post article, please see "Four-Party Peace Talks Briefing Postponement" in the US section of the February 4 Daily Report.]

Earlier in the briefing, Burns also commented on the postponement of the joint US/ROK briefing of the DPRK on the four-party peace talks proposal. Burns said: "We'd like to see the North Koreans. We had two meetings scheduled. Now both of those meetings have been postponed. The North Koreans have very important grain negotiations underway, and they prefer to consummate those negotiations before they get on to the meetings with us and the South Koreans in New York. So we're not going to give out any dates for future meetings until we know that the North Koreans actually intend to attend the meetings. We'll continue talking to them

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2. US Threat Perception Focuses on DPRK, Asia

United Press International ("REPORT: KOREA, GULF TOP U.S. THREATS," Washington, 2/5/97) reported that the new annual report from the National Defense University says the Korean peninsula or the Persian Gulf are the places where US troops are most likely see action in the coming year. The report names Iran, Iraq and the DPRK as the countries most likely to draw US forces into a conflict. In particular, the study says that the DPRK's severe financial hardships could force it to invade the ROK out of desperation. The study also says that Iran and Iraq still "harbor aggressive designs," and warns that no Persian Gulf nation could alone stop an Iranian naval attack against the Straits of Hormuz. In any conflict, the report says, these three countries might view chemical, biological and nuclear weapons "as their first choice rather than as weapons of last resort."

The Associated Press (John Diamond, "CIA SEES THREAT FROM ASIA," Washington, 2/5/97) reported that George Tenet, acting director of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and Lt. Gen. Patrick Hughes, the director of the US Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), said in testimony before the US Senate Intelligence Committee Tuesday that instability and growing military power in Asia pose the greatest security threat now facing the United States. The two intelligence heads

pointed particularly at the DPRK, saying that the combination of its economic crisis and its military power pose the greatest immediate security concern for the US. "What makes us especially concerned about the future evolution of North Korea is its military strength," Tenet said. "It's 1.1 million-strong military retains the ability to inflict enormous destruction on allied forces, including the 37,000 U.S. troops deployed in South Korea," he added. "A Korean war scenario remains our primary near-term military concern. War on the peninsula could erupt with little warning," Hughes said. Hughes identified the PRC as the key long-term security concern facing the US, stemming from the growth of PRC economic and military power in the region. Tenet cited China's "new assertiveness" that has led to occasional friction with Washington over such issues as weapons proliferation, particularly weapons sales to Pakistan and Iran, as well as human rights. The two also outlined potential threats from Iran and Iraq.

3. US President Calls Korean Peace Crucial

US President Bill Clinton, in his State of the Union address Tuesday night (The Wall Street Journal Interactive Edition, "STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS," Transcript, 2/5/97), stated that engaging the DPRK in talks to build a permanent peace on the Korean peninsula is a US security priority. Clinton said that future US security requires building peace in Asia as well as Europe, and that in Asia, "let our progress there not mask the peril that remains. Together with South Korea, we must advance peace talks with North Korea and bridge the Cold War's last divide. And I call on Congress to fund our share of the agreement under which North Korea must continue to freeze and then dismantle its nuclear weapons program."

4. DPRK Food Crisis

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("N. KOREA FOOD SHORTAGE WORSENED BY HARSH WINTER - RED CROSS," Beijing, 2/5/97) reported that Ole Gronning, the International Red Cross representative to the DPRK, said after returning from a three-month visit that the people in the country are struggling through a harsh winter with no heat and dwindling supplies of food. Gronning said the government recently dropped the daily grain ration from 200 grams (7 ounces) of grain per day to 100 grams (3.5 ounces) per day -- far less than the minimum 450 grams (16 ounces) the World Health Organization says an adult with a light job needs to sustain life. The new ration is the equivalent of less than 900 calories, compared with a minimum recommended 2,100 calories. Gronning added that the people in fact need more than the World Health Organization minimum because of their 12-hour work days and the bitter cold. They also are lacking vitamins and minerals, particularly iodine, he said. Iodine deficiency stunts growth and causes goiter and mental disability. Gronning said grain, vegetable and meat supplies are expected to run out by July 1, while the next harvest, not due until October, will supply only 3 to 3.5 million of the 5.5 million tons of grain that will be needed. "It's a human disaster. There's 40 percent of the food basket missing. A lot of things indicate people will not be able to cope much longer," Gronning said.

5. DPRK Leadership Succession

The Associated Press ("N. KOREA EYES SUCCESSION," Tokyo, 2/5/97) reported that Hwang Jang Yop, the secretary of the DPRK Workers party, said Wednesday that Kim Jong-il probably will formally succeed his late father as DPRK's head of state this fall. The DPRK is "refraining from allowing an official succession" before the three-year mourning for Kim Il-sung's death ends July 8, Hwang said in an interview. Hwang is a close confidant to Kim Jong-il.

6. CIA Advocates Chemical Weapons Treaty Ratification

The Associated Press (John Diamond, "CIA: RATIFY CHEMICAL TREATY," Washington, 2/5/97)

reported that George Tenet, acting director of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), said in testimony before the US Senate Intelligence Committee Tuesday that the Chemical Weapons Convention, due to come into force on April 29, is no guarantee of safety but would help intelligence gatherers make sure hostile nations aren't developing chemical arsenals. "This is not a treaty that will be perfectly verifiable," Tenet said. "But there are tools in this treaty such as date exchanges and on-site inspections which will help us verify." Tenet's comments added to Clinton administration arguments for Senate ratification of the treaty, which faces some Republican opposition and must receive a two-thirds vote to be ratified. Critics worry that the US will substitute reliance on voluntary compliance for hardheaded intelligence gathering in determining what foreign countries are stockpiling chemical weapons, and should not ratify the pact until such nations as the DPRK, Libya, Syria, and Iraq have accepted it. Tenet appeared to reject those arguments, saying the US would never rely solely on the word of foreign governments in determining which nations have chemical weapons. The agreement, signed by 160 nations including the US, goes into effect on April 29 with or without US ratification, and the US must ratify the treaty by that date to play a leading role in the treaty's implementation.

II. Republic of Korea

1. US-DPRK Relations

Relations between the US and DPRK have rapidly cooled following the indefinite postponement of the four-party talks briefing session. The US government refused to issue a visa Monday to Yang Hyong-sop, the chairman of the DPRK's Supreme People's Council. Yang, who would have been the highest ranking DPRK official to visit the US, applied for a visa at the US embassy in Beijing on January 27. After the refusal of the visa, Kim Hyong-wu, DPRK ambassador to the UN, protested and threatened to boycott the annual White House breakfast prayer meeting. (Chosun Ilbo, "US-NORTH RELATIONS COOL SUDDENLY," Seoul, 02/05/97)

2. DPRK-Taiwan Nuclear Waste Deal

The ROK government yesterday officially requested that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) investigate whether the DPRK is capable of properly managing nuclear waste. The ROK government also revealed its serious concern over Taiwan's plans to export nuclear waste to the DPRK. The ROK Ambassador to Austria, Lee Seung-kon, met with IAEA Secretary-General Hans Blix yesterday and called on the IAEA to become more actively involved in the issue. Ambassador Lee also questioned the DPRK's capabilities to manage and store radioactive nuclear waste and asked the IAEA to carry out a direct investigation. (The Joong-ang Ilbo, "GOV'T REQUESTS IAEA TO INVESTIGATE DPRK'S NUCLEAR WASTE MANAGING CAPABILITIES," Seoul, 02/05/97)

A Greenpeace vessel and hundreds of fishing boats will stage a massive demonstration in the West Sea to check freighters carrying Taiwanese nuclear waste to the DPRK. Choi Yul, the secretary general of the Korean Federation of Environmental Movements (KFEM), said Monday night that, "If Taiwan pushes through its plan to ship its nuclear waste to North Korea, we will mobilize the Rainbow of the Greenpeace and hundreds of fishing boats in Inchon and Kunsan to block the sea route for its transportation." Choi also stated that a campaign to boycott Taiwanese goods would start as scheduled in order to deter the nuclear waste shipment. The Amsterdam-based international environmental watchdog has already disclosed its willingness to work in solidarity with other groups against the Taiwanese plan. According to Choi, Taiwanese officials have made it clear that the shipment will be made as scheduled because they have no problems in moral terms nor does the shipment break any international laws, in addition to the fact that the DPRK requested the shipment. (The Korea Times, "ENVIRONMENTALISTS TO STAGE SEA DEMONSTRATION AGAINST TAIWAN'S NUCLEAR WASTE SHIPMENT," Seoul, 02/05/97)

According to Representative Park Kwan-yong, chairman of the ROK National Assembly Foreign Affairs-Unification Committee, the Assembly is considering sending a delegation to the US to seek cooperation with US Congressional leaders in the ROK's efforts to deter Taiwan's planned shipment of nuclear waste to the DPRK. Park stated that his committee is considering dispatching the special mission as the US can play a very important role in thwarting the Taiwanese nuclear waste export plan. He also stated that detailed plans will be mapped out after consultation with National Assembly Speaker Kim Soo-han and committee leaders from the ruling and opposition parties. (The Korea Times, "ASSEMBLY MULLS SENDING MISSION TO US ON TAIWAN N-WASTE," Seoul, 02/05/97)

3. US Secretary of State to Visit ROK

As the new US Secretary of State, Madeline Albright will make a two-day visit to Seoul beginning February 22 and will meet with officials including ROK foreign minister Yu Jong-ha, the US State Department announced Tuesday. Nicholas Burns, spokesman for the State Department, said that Albright will visit European and Asian countries from February 15 to 25. (Chosun Ilbo, "ALBRIGHT TO VISIT SEOUL ON FEBRUARY 22," Seoul, 02/05/97) [Ed. note: For more details, please see "US Secretary of State Travel Plans" in the US section of the February 4 Daily Report.]

III. People's Republic of China.

1. DPRK Food Crisis

According to the People's Daily ("DPRK BADLY IN NEED OF FOOD HELP," Pyongyang, A7, 2/4/97), a spokesman for the DPRK's Flood Measures Committee announced on February 3 that, by the end of last year, the DPRK's food inventory was only 246,000 tons. According to the spokesman, the DPRK needs 4.82 million tons of food a year, but last year's grain output was about 2.502 million tons due to the repeated flood disasters in recent years. The spokesman expressed appreciation to the international community for the humanitarian assistance. At the same time, he accused the ROK of setting obstacles on the issue. He said that the food difficulties of the DPRK were temporary.

2. DPRK-Taiwan Nuclear Waste Deal

When asked to comment on a report that the Taiwanese authorities publicly admitted that consensus had been reached on stockpiling some nuclear waste from Taiwan in the territory of the DPRK, PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman Shen Guofang stated that this is a concrete demonstration of the Taiwanese authorities' attempts to create "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan" in the international arena. According to Shen, this move by the Taiwanese authorities violates the relationships between PRC and countries concerned and continues to set obstacles to the improvement and development of the across-Straits relations. Shen also pointed out that the disposal of nuclear waste had very strict technical requirements and that inappropriate disposal or accidents would cause environmental pollution influencing peripheral countries and regions. Shen then added that the PRC was very concerned over this issue. Jie Fang Daily ("TAIWAN STOCKPILING NUCLEAR WASTE IN DPRK IS TO VIOLATE CHINA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER COUNTRIES," Beijing, A4, 1/31/97)

3. UN Deputy Secretary General Visits ROK

China Daily ("DIPLOMATIC TALKS," Seoul, A11, 2/15/97) reported that visiting UN deputy Secretary General Ismat Kittani and ROK Foreign Minister Yoo Chong-ha met in Seoul on February 4 to discuss the DPRK and other issues of international concern. The report said that the talks came as US State Department officials in Washington expressed pessimism over the prospect of DPRK taking

the first step towards peace talks with South Korea.

4. PRC-ROK Relations

The PRC supports efforts by relevant parties to build peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and establish a reliable peace mechanism there, PRC President Jiang Zemin stated in Beijing on January 29. During a meeting with visiting ROK National Assembly Speaker Kim Soo-han, Jiang stated that the PRC will continue to play a constructive role in this aspect. Jiang stated that relations between the PRC and the ROK have proceeded comprehensively in political, economic, cultural, scientific and technological fields since diplomatic ties were established five years ago. On the issue of the Korean peninsula, Jiang stated the he hopes the northern and southern sides of the peninsula can settle their differences through dialogue, which will be helpful for realizing peace, self-determination and reunification of the peninsula. In response, Kim stated that the ROK hopes that the situation on the Korean peninsula will develop toward peace. He also thanked the PRC for its stand on the peninsula issue. Wen Hui Daily ("JIANG ZEMING MEETS WITH ROK NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SPEAKER," Beijing, A4, 1/30/97)

5. PRC-US Relations

The upcoming visit to the PRC by US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright is an important event in PRC-US relations, PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman Shen Guofang said in Beijing on January 30. Shen told a routine news briefing that Albright and Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen will hold discussions on bilateral relations during her visit in late February. The PRC is ready to work together with the US to push bilateral ties onto a normal track and to strengthen PRC-US cooperation in the international arena, Shen said. As to human rights issues, Shen reiterated that the PRC is ready to hold talks with the US on various levels. But, he stressed, the talks must be held on the basis of mutual respect. China Daily ("ALBRIGHT TRIP SEEN AS POSITIVE," A1, 1/31/97)

When meeting with Ronald B Woodard, president of the Boeing Commercial Airplane Group, in Beijing on January 30, PRC Premier Li Peng said that it is high time for the US to solve the matter of the PRC's Most Favored Nation (MFN) status once and for all. During the meeting, Li also expressed his appreciation for Boeing's efforts to support the renewal of the PRC's MFN status in recent years. Li called the merger of the two aviation giants an important event in world aviation history, and expressed the hope that cooperation between the new company and the PRC would continue. Jie Fang Daily ("LI PENG HOPES BOEING WILL STRENGTHEN ITS COOPERATIONS WITH CHINA," Beijing, A4, 1/31/97)

When asked to comment on the 1996 Human Rights Report released by the US Department of State, PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman Tang Guoqiang stated in Beijing on February 1 that the US must stop its interference in the internal affairs of the PRC by using human rights as an excuse. According to Tang, the PRC has always protected and promoted the human rights and basic freedoms of people from all ethnic groups, according to the Constitution and relevant laws. The government had made obvious achievements in that regard, he added. Facts are proof that the PRC's actual situation conforms to the fundamental interest of the PRC people and gives priority to people's rights to survival and development while strengthening democracy and improving the legal system to comprehensively promote human rights on a basis of reform, development and stability, he said. People's Daily ("FM SPOKESMAN COMMENTS ON US HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT," Beijing, A4, 2/2/97)

Following six days of hard wrangling, PRC and US negotiators signed the fifth PRC-US textiles agreement in Beijing on February 2. On the same day, a spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation (Moftec) announced that the PRC Government had decided to

withdraw its retaliatory measures of temporarily suspending imports of some products from the US. After the negotiations, the head of the PRC team, Li Dongsheng, said that the agreement demonstrates the common interests of the US and PRC in developing trade and economic relations. People's Daily ("NEW TEXTILE AGREEMENT BETWEEN CHINA AND THE US SIGNED," Beijing, A4, 2/3/97)

Jie Fang Daily ("35 US CONGRESSMEN VISITED CHINA IN JANUARY," A4, 2/4/97) stated that an average of one member of the US Congress per day has visited the PRC since the beginning of 1997, marking a new atmosphere in Beijing's diplomacy and prompting optimism for PRC-US ties. In January, the PRC's People's Institute of Foreign Affairs received five US congressional delegations, with a total of 35 representatives and senators. It was the first visit to the PRC for most of them and the highest number of members of the US Congress ever to visit in one month, the report said. More visits by US representatives to the PRC would lead to better understanding, diplomats in Beijing observed.

6. Cross-Straits Relations

On January 30, People's Daily published an editorial marking the second anniversary of PRC President Jiang Zeming's eight-point proposition on the Taiwan issue. The editorial said that the underlying theme of the president's speech was to stick to the principle of "one China," as Taiwan is an inseparable part of China, and adherence to the principle of "one China" is a political basis for safeguarding cross-Straits relations and peaceful reunification. "We have noticed that the Taiwan authorities, under pressure both from within and outside, have begun to respond to the important speech of President Jiang Zemin, and at least make gestures in the direction of strategic readjustments regarding some questions in cross-Straits relations," the editorial said. However, it pointed out that in deed, the Taiwan authorities still stick to their separatist stance, continue with their activities of creating "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan," and further block economic and trade relations with the motherland. People's Daily ("CARRYING OUT JIANG'S EIGHT-POINT PROPOSITION," A1, 1/30/97)

Responding to the recent "National Development Conference," a spokesman from the Taiwan Affairs Offices of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the PRC and the State Council stated that the Taiwanese authorities defined the relations between the two sides of the Taiwan Straits as "two equal political entities," adding nothing about "one China" and reunification. The spokesman added that this signals that the Taiwanese authorities are once again deviating from the "one China" principle and denouncing reunification. Only if the Taiwanese authorities stop their activities to create "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan," and wipe out all the restrictions on cross-Straits interactions (such as economic cooperation and direct postal, commercial and transport links) can a proper atmosphere be developed for the resumption of talks. Wen Hui Daily ("TAIWAN ACCUSED OF STRAYING FROM THE PATH," Beijing, A1, 2/2/97)

7. Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance

Xinhua News Agency issued a commentary on January 29 noting that the PRC-British Joint Declaration, and especially the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), already sufficiently guarantee Hong Kong residents' rights and freedoms, People's Daily ("NECESSARY MEASURES TO SAFEGUARD THE SINO-BRITISH JOINT DECLARATION," A4, 1/30/97) reported. Moreover, it stated that the PRC has smoothly solved problems of how to apply "the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights" and "the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights" in the HKSAR. The dispute about human rights in Hong Kong, which is still going on, was provoked by the UK, and "the Bill of Rights Ordinance" is the result of the UK going against its commitment, the article noted.

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