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I. United States

1. Four-Party Peace Talks Preliminary Meeting

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The New York Times (Steven Lee Myers, "NORTH KOREA SITS DOWN FOR TALKS WITH SOUTH KOREA AND U.S.," New York, 8/6/97) reported that US officials see the DPRK's willingness to

participate in Korean peace talks as a sign of its desperation over its increasingly severe food shortages. One senior US official was quoted as saying that DPRK leaders apparently decided the talks are "necessary to keep the international community engaged" in providing emergency food aid. A spokesman for the ROK delegation said that during the closed negotiations, the DPRK's deputy minister for foreign affairs and delegate to the talks, Kim Gye-gwan, expressed hopes that the talks would "result in a fruitful conclusion." However, US officials have remained wary and have sought to lower expectations. "I think that with respect to tension on the Korean peninsula, we are better off being engaged in this process and in this structure than we would be otherwise," a senior US State Department official was quoted as saying. "So simply having commenced has some intangible benefit."

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first time, will have over the DPRK, its formerly close ally.

2. New DPRK Food Aid

The New York Times ("U.S. TO CONSIDER MORE FOOD AID FOR NORTH KOREA", Online Late News Update, 8/6/97) reported that US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said Wednesday that the US will consider sending additional food aid for famine victims in the DPRK. "We have been a major donor through the World Food Program and have done a great deal and will see whether we can do more," Albright told reporters in Washington. "It is the right thing to do, but it is, I think, pragmatically important for our long-term goal for the peninsula," she added. However, Albright also said the US would not consider the DPRK's demand that the US withdraw its troops from the ROK.

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("AUSTRALIA TO PROVIDE A\$3.5 MLN IN FOOD AID TO NORTH KOREA," Canberra, 8/6/97) reported that Australian Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer announced Wednesday that Australia will provide A\$3.5 million in food aid to the DPRK. Downer said the aid is in addition to the more than A\$4 million already provided. "This latest contribution from Australia comes at a time when it is clear that the food situation in North Korea is worsening, with millions of adults and children facing malnutrition and disease," Downer said in a statement. Australia will channel its assistance through the World Food Program.

3. DPRK Famine

Reuters ("AID GROUPS SAY KOREAN FAMINE WORSENS," Hong Kong, 8/6/97) reported that international aid agencies said on Wednesday in a joint forum intended to increase donations and assistance that famine in the DPRK has worsened sharply and people are now openly talking about starving children dying. The agencies -- Caritas, Oxfam Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Red Cross -- said the DPRK's maize crop has been devastated by the severe drought in recent weeks, and the country will need at least 700,000 metric tons of grain to tide it through to October. Officials estimate that 37.6 percent, or 800,000, of children aged up to six years old are suffering from malnutrition. Of these, 80,000 suffer severe malnutrition. "The situation is very serious. People are beginning to talk openly about children dying. Teachers say some children don't come to school any more because they have passed away," said Kathi Zellweger, director of international cooperation with Caritas Hong Kong. "These children, even if they survive, will be physically stunted and there is a possibility of mental retardation," said Tricia Parker of Oxfam Hong Kong. "Some nurseries have run out of food and some are closed. Some parents have stopped sending their children to nurseries because they know they won't be fed there," Parker said.

4. US POWs in DPRK

The Associated Press ("CAPTURED U.S. AIRMEN ALIVE AFTER KOREA, REPORT INDICATES," 8/6/97) reported that a US Air Force report, dated October 19, 1955, and declassified June 5, provides new details on US servicemen reputedly left in the DPRK after the end of the 1950-53 Korean War. The report says that the US Air Force had indications that dozens of missing airmen were alive in PRC or DPRK prisons after the exchange of prisoners, and includes information as to their number and identities. The report, prepared by the Escape and Evasion Section of the 6004th Air Intelligence Service Squadron, draws on sketchy information from repatriated POWs, enemy propaganda broadcasts and intelligence sources in the DPRK, and offers no proof that any of the 137 men it mentions were still alive at that time. The strongest statement in the report pertains to the case of five members of a B-29 bomber crew shot down six months before the war ended. The report describes a dramatic failed attempt to rescue the crew, and says the five "were known to be alive in communist hands as of the close of the Korean conflict." The five never returned. Their names -- and most of the others mentioned in the report -- are on a US Defense Department list of 389 men from

all services who are unaccounted for from the war and about whom the US government believes the PRC or the DPRK had information. The PRC and the DPRK maintain they kept no US prisoners after the war. For the first time since the war's end, the DPRK has agreed to discuss cases of missing servicemen, and is allowing US Defense Department investigators to search areas of the country where remains of US servicemen are believed to be buried.

II. Republic of Korea

1. Four-Party Peace Talks Preliminary Meeting

The four-party peace talks preliminary meeting was convened in New York Tuesday, with the ROK calling for the realization of four-party talks in four weeks after the four countries reached an agreement on procedural issues. The delegations from the four countries were led by ROK Deputy Foreign Minister Song Young-shik, DPRK Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye-gwan, US Acting Assistant Secretary of State Charles Kartman, and PRC Assistant Foreign Minister Chen Jian. Each delegate made a key-note speech in the morning session, followed by discussions about the date, venue, level of representation and agenda items for the four-party talks in the afternoon. In a key-note speech, chief ROK delegate Song urged the DPRK to enter the minister-level four-party talks at the earliest possible date because it is "urgent" to address issues at stake on the Korean peninsula, ROK Foreign Ministry officials said. Song proposed that the four-party talks be held in the capitals of the four participating countries on a "rotational" basis, and that minister-level officials lead delegations of five to six individuals from each country. Song said the agenda should focus on the establishment of a peace system and steps to reduce tension and build confidence between the two rival states, noting that the 1991 "basic agreement on inter-Korean reconciliation" provides a valuable tool for the settlement of various inter-Korean issues. ROK officials said that US delegation leader Charles Kartman proposed similar procedures. DPRK chief delegate Kim Gye-gwan reportedly called for advance grain aid and lifting of US-imposed economic embargoes against his country, and contended that the withdrawal of 37,000 US forces stationed in the ROK should be one of the agenda items for the peace talks. PRC chief delegate Chen Jian, stressing the importance of a mechanism to ensure peace and stability on the Korean peninsula, reportedly called for an early realization of four-party talks, reflecting what officials called the PRC's "neutral" position towards the ROK and the DPRK. Despite the apparent good will among officials at the meeting, few expect an early breakthrough in the commencement of the four-party talks themselves because the DPRK's call for advance grain aid and other demands are unacceptable to the ROK and the US, and it is thought likely that the four countries will have to meet several times to narrow their differences. (Korea Times, Son Key-young, "SEOUL CALLS FOR 4-PARTY TALKS IN 4 WEEKS AFTER AGREEMENT," 08/06/97)

2. DPRK Drought

According to UN spokesman Fred Eckhard, the severe drought in the DPRK has caused the loss of 70 percent of the maize crop, which will worsen the food situation for the country already on the brink of famine. The drought "will dramatically reduce the availability of cereals for the period November 1997 to October 1998," Eckhard said. The food situation is also expected to worsen in August and September "as part of this crop had been earmarked for consumption as 'green corn'." The bleak UN report came less than 24 hours after aid workers warned that the searing drought had destroyed hopes the famine-struck nation might recover food self-sufficiency this year. Tricia Parker, program director of Oxfam Hong Kong, said the DPRK had hoped to get back on their feet after this harvest, "but the drought has put an end to that." Eckhard said a crop and food supply assessment mission will be going to the DPRK next week to determine the damage. According to a press release by the UN, "The present findings, as well as information received from several other sources indicate that, without doubt, the severity of the drought has encompassed the whole country. ... It is

going to be a major catastrophe that no one realized because they kept on hoping that it would rain tomorrow." (Korea Times, "DROUGHT CAUSES 70 PCT LOSS OF N.KOREAN MAIZE CROP," 08/06/97)

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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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