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I. United States

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1. DPRK-ROK Relations

Reuters ("N.KOREA WANTS OPENING IN NORTH-SOUTH BARRIER," Moscow, 02/06/98) reported that Russia's Itar-Tass news agency said Friday that Son Song-pil, DPRK ambassador to Russia, has said that the DPRK favors punching Berlin Wall-style holes in the anti-tank barrier dividing the

Korean peninsula. Son was quoted as saying, "North Korea proposes making passages in the reinforced concrete wall dividing the Korean peninsula as a first step toward its full demolition." He added that the DPRK had for years been seeking the demolition of the wall but realized this could not happen quickly and that opening up passages would at least help start the process. However, he noted, "For this we need a political decision from the South Korean authorities."

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2. DPRK Defector

The Associated Press ("N. KOREA DEFECTOR ARRIVES IN SEOUL," Seoul, 02/06/98) reported that Kim Dong-su, a third secretary at the DPRK mission to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome, arrived in the ROK on Friday after defecting to the ROK embassy in Rome. Kim stated, "I increasingly felt uncertain of the future of North Korea, where food shortages are getting worse and kids are starving to death." Kim said that he had served as a diplomat in Europe for more than 10 years, including three in Rome. He added that he decided to defect after learning of the earlier defections of DPRK diplomats.

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3. ROK Financial Crisis

The Washington Post (Sandra Sugawara, "KOREA UNIONS AGREE TO ALLOW LAYOFFS," Tokyo, 02/06/98, G03), the New York Times (Sheryl WuDunn, "PRESIDENT-ELECT NEGOTIATES LAYOFF AGREEMENT IN KOREA," Tokyo, 02/06/98) and the Wall Street Journal (Michael Schuman and Namju Cho, "SOUTH KOREAN LABOR UNIONS AGREE TO ALLOW LAYOFFS TO AID ECONOMY," Seoul, 02/06/98) reported that ROK labor unions, at a three-party committee of government officials, business leaders, and unionists, agreed Friday to permit layoffs at troubled companies, if the unions receive 60 days' notice and are informed on how layoffs are to proceed. Layoffs will also be legalized for mergers and acquisitions of companies, if they can help the financial positions of the parties involved. In return, the government will increase the unemployment insurance fund to 5 trillion won (US\$3.1 billion) and allow teachers to form unions from July 1999. Business leaders also promised to take steps to avoid excessive layoffs. Labor-reform legislation based on the plan is expected to pass through the National Assembly this month.

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4. PRC-Taiwan Relations

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA'S NEGOTIATOR ON TAIWAN SAYS TALKS 'UNAVOIDABLE'," Beijing, 02/06/98) reported that the PRC's official Xinhua news agency said Friday that Tang Shubei, vice-chairman of the PRC Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits, stated that high-level talks with Taiwan are "so crucial they cannot be side-stepped." Tang also called political talks "unavoidable" this year. However, Tang added that there has so far been no "explicit response" from Taiwanese authorities, though "the significance of these talks is recognized by a growing number of Taiwanese".

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5. Taiwan Electoral Politics

The Washington Post (Keith B. Richburg, "TAIPEI'S AMBITIOUS MAYOR," Taipei, 02/06/98, A35) reported that Taipei Mayor Chen Shui-bian in an interview pointed to recent opposition victories by

Great Britain's Labor Party and the ROK's Kim Dae-jung as evidence of the opposition party's chances of winning control of the legislature this year and the presidency in 2000. Chen stated, "I think the DPP (Democratic Progressive Party) has the same potential to become the ruling party. I have great confidence the DPP can win the presidency in the year 2000." Regarding possible Taiwanese independence from the PRC, Chen stated, "Taiwan's future should be decided by its 21.5 million people by means of a referendum. This does not mean once the DPP is in power, or once the DPP's candidate becomes the president, we will immediately announce a referendum to decide Taiwan's independence." He added, "we will not gamble with the lives and property of the Taiwanese people." Chen also denied rumors that his party has established secret contacts with the PRC, saying, "We have no channel, we have no opportunity, we have no possibility to have contact with mainland authorities." The article pointed out that the likely ruling party candidate for president in 2000, Vice President Lien Chan, has suffered a drop in popularity after a tenure as prime minister in which he was blamed for failing to reduce Taiwan's crime rate, and that he is likely to be challenged for the nomination by provincial governor James Soong. Analysts say that such a split in the ruling party could help to elect Chen.

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6. US Bases in Japan

The Associated Press ("OKINAWA GOV. OPPOSES U.S. BASE," Tokyo, 02/06/98) reported that Okinawa Governor Masahide Ota said Friday he opposes building an offshore heliport for the US military. 54 percent of Okinawa voters rejected the proposed heliport in a non-binding December referendum. Reacting to Ota's statement, Japanese Chief Cabinet Spokesman Kanezo Muraoka threatened to scuttle an economic development plan for Okinawa, accusing Ota of changing the conditions for government aid.

II. Republic of Korea

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1. ROK-DPRK Relations

ROK President-elect Kim Dae-jung's transition team has decided to allow ROK citizens, aged 65 or more, to visit the DPRK for the purposes of family reunion, and called for Pyongyang to adopt similar policy. The reunion of estranged family members was included in the "100 largest tasks" of the next administration, which takes office on February 25. (Korea Times, Son Key-young, "S. KOREANS, AGED 65 OR MORE, TO BE ALLOWED TO VISIT NK FOR FAMILY REUNION," 02/06/98)

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2. DPRK Foreign Affairs

The DPRK has recalled its ambassadors in 12 countries as part of an administrative reshuffling but has not appointed their successors, apparently due to a shortage of foreign currency, DPRK observers reported on February 5. The DPRK's Korean Central Broadcasting Station reported last December that ambassadors to Zambia, Yemen, Guinea, Macedonia, Yugoslavia, and Denmark had been repatriated. In January, the DPRK also repatriated its ambassadors to Senegal, Togo, Algeria, Nigeria, Uganda, and Jordan. (Korea Herald, "DPRK RECALLS 12 AMBASSADORS WITHOUT REPLACING THEM," 02/06/98)

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3. PRC-US Relations

Reports said on February 4 that PRC Premier Li Peng launched a scathing attack against the US, accusing it of wanting to rule the world and meddling in the internal affairs of other countries. The aggressive tone adopted by Li in an interview given to a US monthly and then reprinted by the official Xinhua news agency, contrasted with a new climate of detente between the US and the PRC following PRC President Jiang Zemin's trip to the US last year. (Korea Times, "PRC PREMIER ACCUSES US OF WANTING TO RULE THE WORLD," 02/06/98)

PRC authorities had recently confirmed to US Defense Secretary William Cohen that they will stop transferring anti-ship cruise missiles to Iran, said US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Robert Einhorn on February 4 (US time). However, Einhorn added, during testimony before the House International Relations Committee, that the PRC had sold missile equipment and technology, dual-use chemicals and production equipment. In addition, the PRC has "advanced conventional arms to recipients in regions of instability, primarily Iran and Pakistan," said Einhorn. [Ed. note: NAPSNet is issuing the complete text of Einhorn's statement today as a [Special Report](#).] (Korea Times, "PRC TRYING TO STOP SPREADING DANGEROUS NUCLEAR TECH: US OFFICIAL," 02/06/98)

III. Japan

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1. Japan-DPRK Relations

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("DPRK REVEALS LIST OF MISSING JAPANESE CIVILIANS FOR THE FIRST TIME," 02/04/98) reported that, at the Japan-DPRK official-level preliminary talks on normalization on February 3 in Beijing, with regard to the DPRK's suspected abduction of Japanese civilians, the DPRK revealed for the very first time a list of missing Japanese civilians. Although the names of these missing Japanese were not revealed, the Japanese side will confirm the existence of these civilians. The article added that a Japanese delegate from the ruling coalition had already given the DPRK a list of suspected missing Japanese civilians at the Japan-DPRK Red Cross meeting last November and that the DPRK had agreed to investigate based on the list.

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2. Japan-US Security Relations

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("US DEFENSE REPORT SAYS JAPAN-US SECURITY ARRANGEMENT IS A LYNCHPIN IN US POLICY FOR ASIA," Washington, 02/04/98) reported that, according to the 1998 US Defense Report, which was officially announced on February 3 by Secretary of Defense William Cohen to be submitted to President Bill Clinton, the US robust alliance with Japan, Australia, and the ROK is the core for achieving stability and economic prosperity in East Asia and that the Japan-US security arrangement, strengthened by the New Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation, is a lynchpin for US security policy for Asia and for achieving global objectives. With regard to the proposed Japan-US joint development of the ballistic missile defense (BMD) initiative, the Defense Report states without mentioning Japan that the initiative will promote improvement of interoperability between the US and its allies and that it will also promote their cooperative relations.

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3. US Bases in Japan

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("OKINAWA GOVERNOR TO REFUSE CONSTRUCTION OF ALTERNATIVE HELIPORT," 02/06/98) reported that Okinawa Governor Masahide Ota will officially announce on February 6 his opposition to the construction of a heliport to replace the US Futenma Base, which, according to the report, will likely freeze the return of the base to Okinawa. Ota said, "I feel grateful to Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, but I just cannot agree to the construction." The report suggested that with the gubernatorial election drawing nearer, Ota has been urged by those against the construction to announce his opposition to the construction as soon as possible.

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4. Japan-PRC Defense Relations

The Nikkei Shimbun ("JAPAN-PRC DEFENSE SUMMIT MEETING AGREED TO EXTEND DEFENSE EXCHANGE," 02/04/98) reported that Japanese Defense Agency Director General Fumio Kyuma and his visiting PRC counterpart Chi Haotian met at the Defense Agency on February 4 and agreed to realize an exchange of high-ranking defense officials between Japan's Defense Agency and the People's Liberation Army, as early as possible. They also agreed that Chi invites Kyuma to the PRC in the earlier part of this year, and to begin discussing mutual visits of naval ships. The report pointed out this was the first defense summit of its kind in eleven years, and that this indicates a resumption of top Japan-PRC defense exchanges, which had been deadlocked since the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989.

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5. PRC-Russian Relations

The Asahi Shimbun ("JIANG ZEMIN TO VISIT RUSSIA BEFORE COMING TO JAPAN," Beijing, 02/06/98) reported that PRC Prime Minister Jiang Zemin will visit Russia before coming to Japan in September. According to a diplomatic source from Beijing, Jiang's visit to Japan will take place in mid-September, while his visit to Russia will be scheduled for before that. The report cited a Japanese Foreign Ministry official as saying that the PRC leaders have realized that the post-Cold War international environment is entering a new phase, and that each major power is now trying to reshape mutual relations based on its own strategic interests. The report also pointed out that although the PRC denies that its "strategic partnership" with Russia posits any country as an enemy, it is definitely targeted at the US and Japan. The report added that, according to a source from Beijing, the PRC will deny the scenario of "China as a threat," and secure its export market.

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.

Produced by [the Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development](#).

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