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I. United States

1. US and ROK Cancel Joint Military Exercise

US State Department Spokesman Nicholas Burns ("STATE DEPARTMENT REPORT, THURSDAY, MARCH 6," USIA Report, 2/6/97) confirmed media reports that the US and the ROK have decided to cancel "Team Spirit" joint military exercises for 1997. "We made this decision taking into account the overall security situation on the Korean peninsula," Burns said. "This cancellation will have no impact on the readiness of our military forces -- American and South Korean -- to defend South Korea." Burns said the cancellation is part of an effort to build confidence and "to create an atmosphere to reduce tensions on the Korean peninsula."

Reuters ("UNITED STATES, SOUTH KOREA SCRAP WAR GAMES," Seoul, 3/6/97) reported that the US and the ROK canceled this year's Team Spirit military exercises as a goodwill gesture to encourage the DPRK to join Korean peninsula peace talks. The announcement comes after the Wednesday's landmark meeting among US, ROK and DPRK officials in New York to brief the DPRK on the joint US/ROK four-party peace talks proposal. Pyongyang has bitterly denounced past Team Spirit exercises, which involve tens of thousands of troops from all branches of both countries militaries, as preparation for an invasion. The once-annual Team Spirit exercises have not been held since 1993, although a decision on whether to resume them is taken each year. A ROK defense ministry statement said the cancellatio

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I. United States

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2. Briefing on Four-Party Peace Talks Proposal

A senior State Department official, speaking on "background" at a press briefing on Wednesday ("TRANSCRIPT: BRIEFING ON 3/5 U.S.-ROK JOINT BRIEFING FOR THE DPRK," USIA Transcript, 3/6/97) said that the joint US-ROK briefing of the DPRK on the joint US/ROK four-party peace talks proposal "went forward in an atmosphere of sincerity and seriousness." "What we sought to do today was to demonstrate to the North Koreans that we had on the table before them a serious proposal, and I have every reason to believe that they took that at face value and will report it as such to Pyongyang," the official said. According to the official, "the North Korean delegate, Vice Minister Kim Gye Gwan, thanked my ROK counterpart, Deputy Minister Song Young Shik, and me for our comments and replied that he would report them fully to his capital for consideration." The proposal is very simple, the official continued. "We proposed that we meet, four parties, in a place to be determined, at a level to be determined, an agenda to talk about peace and a peace mechanism, and then a peace agreement. No strings attached. Everything's on the table," the official said. Summing up the reaction of the DPRK delegation to the proposal, the official said "their questions indicated understanding and seriousness. They were not frivolous. And since I have complete faith in the worthiness of our proposal, I believe that the North Koreans will immediately perceive that in Pyongyang and that they will quickly accept it." [Ed. note: NAPSNet will distribute the full transcript of this briefing subsequent to distribution of today's Daily Report.]

Reuters ("U.S. HOPEFUL N.KOREA TO JOIN FORMAL TALKS," New York, 3/5/97) and the Associated Press ("RIVAL KOREAS MEET FOR TALKS," New York, 3/6/97) reported that participants in Wednesday's joint US/ROK briefing of the DPRK on the four-party Korean peace talks proposal generally viewed the meeting in positive terms. The briefing session was the first meeting of high-level officials from the two Koreas on peace and security issues since a 1972 meeting in Pyongyang, and the first ever on the topic of replacing the 1953 Armistice with a formal peace treaty. After Wednesday's session, DPRK vice minister for foreign affairs and delegation head Kim Gye Gwan said the discussions, lasting approximately four hours, took place "in a sincere atmosphere." Kim told reporters through an interpreter: "We are prepared to listen to whatever proposals promote peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. As for the contents of the briefing we heard today, we need further study of these proposals." ROK deputy foreign minister Song Young-shik said, "We consider that this briefing was very significant. Although North Korea did not clearly express whether to attend the meeting (peace talks) or not, the fact that North Korea listened attentively to the briefing ... and studied the proposal, it can be assessed as positive." In Washington, US State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns told reporters that "there were no breakthroughs but the United States is hopeful that today's talks will lead to North Korea joining the formal four-party talks." Burns added, "They asked questions about the nature of the proposal we put together. We believe the United States and South Korea made a sincere and fair proposal and frankly we don't see any reason why the North Koreans won't respond to it positively." In the briefing, the US and the ROK proposed that delegations to the four-party talks be headed by Cabinet-level officials and be held at any place, including the DPRK. The DPRK delegation now plans to report to Pyongyang on the discussions, but there was no indication when they might reply to the proposals, US officials said. Officials from the US and the ROK were scheduled to meet Thursday, followed by a bilateral meeting between the US and the DPRK on Friday.

3. US Military Official Expects DPRK Collapse

The Associated Press ("N. KOREA COLLAPSE PREDICTED," Washington, 3/6/97) reported that US Army General John Tilelli Jr., the commander of US forces in the ROK, told the US House National Security Committee that the DPRK is heading for collapse. "Inevitably, the DPRK will disintegrate unless fundamental changes are made from within, or a large amount of external assistance is provided," Tilelli said. "Absent is the type of leadership willing to implement the essential changes required to halt a collapse," Tilelli said. "Therefore, you can understand our concern over the

uncertainty and potential explosiveness of the situation." Admiral Joseph Prueher, the US Pacific commander, also addressed the issue of the DPRK before the committee, saying that because of the paucity of information coming out of that country, it is difficult to predict when change will occur -- "one to 10 years, perhaps, but it could come faster." The two officials also expressed concerns about the proliferation of PRC missile technology, which is increasingly in demand from Mideast nations.

4. Taiwan Acquires Warplanes

The Associated Press ("U.S. JETS TO ARRIVE IN TAIWAN," Taipei, 3/6/97) reported that Taiwan Defense Minister Chiang Chung-ling said Wednesday that the first French Mirage and American F-16 warplanes ordered by Taiwan as part of a major military overhaul will arrive next month. Taiwan ordered 60 Mirage 2000-5s and 150 F-16s in 1992 to replace its aging American F-104s and F-5Es. They are part of a modernization that includes radar-dodging missile frigates from France, anti-missile defense systems and advanced artillery. Chiang also said deployment would continue of the homemade Indigenous Defensive Fighter, developed in the 1980s when PRC pressure stopped the US and other major arms suppliers from selling to Taiwan. Plans call for 130 of the planes, of which about half already have been acquired, Chiang said.

II. Republic of Korea

1. Briefing on Four-Party Peace Talks Proposal

A ROK report said that the four-party peace talks briefing scheduled to be held in New York Wednesday will be a test of the DPRK's will to follow a new diplomatic course in the face of deteriorating domestic difficulties. The report said most officials and analysts believe that the real motive for the DPRK's decision to attend the briefing is to create a favorable climate for international aid and bilateral negotiations with Washington and not because it has a genuine interest in the four-party talks, which would also involve the PRC. ROK officials have said they will explain Seoul's ideas on the agenda of the four-party talks, the level of representation, the purpose, and the background of the four-party talks proposal at the three-way briefing. They are also expected to try to induce the DPRK to come to the four-party meeting by putting forward a list of potential benefits the DPRK would gain if it engaged in sincere discussions at the meeting. Analysts say, however, that the DPRK is expected to give ambiguous answers during the three-way briefing and be more active in bilateral talks with the US, in the hopes of drawing maximum concessions from the US and the ROK. Agenda items for US-DPRK talks, which begin on Friday in New York, will include the exchange of diplomatic liaison offices, a ban on the DPRK's export of missiles to the Middle East, and recovery of remains of US soldiers missing from the 1950-53 Korean War. (Korea Herald, "4-PARTY TALKS BRIEFING TO BE TEST ON NORTH KOREA'S WILL," Kim Kyung-ho, Seoul, 03/05/97)

2. DPRK-Taiwan Nuclear Waste Deal

The DPRK has issued an import license for Taiwan's nuclear waste in a move to begin its importation, a PRC daily reported yesterday. The newspaper said that the license was issued in the name of the DPRK's Nuclear Safety Inspection Committee, which will be delivered by three DPRK officials in charge of nuclear issues. Taiwan Power Co., the nation's state-run company that signed the import deal with the DPRK, plans to submit the import license together with a request to obtain approval for the export of the nuclear waste from Taiwan's Atomic Energy Committee. (Joong Ang Ilbo, "NORTH KOREA ISSUES IMPORT LICENSE FOR TAIWAN'S NUCLEAR WASTE," 03/05/97)

3. ROK Attends Talks on Radioactive Waste Management

A five-member ROK delegation will attend a meeting regarding an international radioactive waste management convention, which will be held in Vienna March 6-14. During the meeting, sponsored by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), participants will discuss whether to apply the convention's resolutions to the issue of spent nuclear fuel and requirements for trans-boundary movement of radioactive waste. During the meeting in Vienna, the ROK delegation will push actively for the restriction of transferring nuclear waste across national borders in order to prevent Taiwan's export of waste to the DPRK, the ministry official said. Draft provisions of the convention call for a country importing radioactive waste to have administrative and technical capacity and regulatory structure. But IAEA member experts have disagreed on the definition and rights of a transit country. (Korea Herald, "KOREA TO ATTEND TALKS ON RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT IN VIENNA," 03/06/97)

4. Hwang Defection

The DPRK has retracted its intention to admit the bid for asylum of top DPRK ideologue Hwang Jang-yop, the Yomiuri Shimbun said Wednesday. The new twist has stalled negotiations between the PRC and the ROK, and between the PRC and the DPRK, a source said. Hwang, returning from a trip to Japan, requested asylum at the ROK embassy in Beijing on February 12. After seeing Hwang's defection statement and corroborating its authenticity, DPRK leader Kim Jong-il hinted he could accept the defection. However, the DPRK last Saturday notified the PRC of its reversal of this intention, bringing negotiations to a halt, the source said. Pyongyang has been demanding that the ROK should not use Hwang for political purposes. Another source told the Yomiuri that the DPRK was seeking the return of Kim Duk-hong, an aide for Hwang who has also requested asylum. (Korea Times, "P'YANG REVERSES ACCEPTANCE OF IDEOLOGUE'S DEFECTION: REPORT," 03/05/97)

5. ROK Participates in ASEAN Forum

The ROK has sent a three-member delegation to a third meeting of a working group on confidence-building measures under the umbrella of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which will open for a three-day session in Beijing today. Delegates from 21 member states of the ARF, a group launched in July 1994 to enhance security in the Asia-Pacific region, will discuss implementing confidence-building steps and work on new measures. During the past two rounds of the meetings last year, they agreed to encourage ARF members to publish defense white papers, exchange military personnel and information and give notice of impending military drills in order to enhance mutual confidence. The ROK, an active participant in ARF conferences, has maintained a position that multilateral security cooperation in the region should be a supplement to existing bilateral alliances, a ministry official said. (Korea Herald, "KOREA SENDS TEAM TO ASEAN FORUM," 03/06/97)

6. ROK-Japan Fishery Talks

Officials from the ROK and Japan will meet in Seoul Thursday and Friday for working-level fishery talks, the ROK Foreign Ministry said. During the talks, both sides will focus their discussions on establishing a new fishing agreement. The two sides will also consult each other on how to deal with the PRC to create a more extensive fishing system covering waters in Northeast Asia, a ministry spokesman said. One of the points of contention is that the PRC has insisted that the ROK allow PRC fishing boats to operate in all waters outside its 12-nautical-mile territorial sea until the two countries agree on the boundaries of their exclusive economic zones (EEZs). Also, the Japanese have complained that ROK fishermen are depleting fish stocks in Japanese waters. (Korea Herald, "KOREA, JAPAN TO MEET FOR WORKING-LEVEL FISHERY TALKS IN SEOUL," 03/05/97)

7. ROK Cabinet Shake-up

ROK President Kim Young-sam yesterday replaced ministers of seven central ministries and three minister-level government officials in a cabinet shake-up. Rep. Kang Kyung-shik of the ruling New Korea Party (NKP) replaced Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economy Han Seung-soo, who was relieved of his position as an act of political and administrative responsibility for the Hanbo loan scandal. President Kim also replaced Home Minister Suh Chung-hwa with Kang Wun-tae, former Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. Choi Sang-yop, former head of the Office of Legislation, was appointed Justice Minister to replace Ahn Woo-mahn, presidential spokesman Yoon Yoe-joon announced yesterday. (Joong Ang Ilbo, "TEN MINISTER-LEVEL OFFICIALS REPLACED IN CABINET SHAKE-UP," 03/06/97)

8. US Vice President Will Visit Seoul

US Vice President Al Gore will make a two-day visit to the ROK beginning March 28 at the invitation of new Prime Minister Koh Kun. Gore will also visit the PRC and Japan, a diplomatic source stated yesterday. Vice President Gore's visit to the ROK is worth noting as it will be made amidst movements for policy changes in Northeast Asia after the death of PRC leader Deng Xiaoping and the defection of Hwang Jang-yop. During his visit, Gore will pay a courtesy visit to President Kim Young-sam at the Blue House and give him greetings and messages from President Clinton. President Kim and Al Gore will also reportedly exchange views on the ways to further expand ROK-US cooperation as well as on the extremely volatile political situation in the DPRK. (Joong Ang Ilbo, "US VICE PRESIDENT AL GORE TO VISIT KOREA ON MARCH 28," 03/05/97)

III. People's Republic of China.

1. PRC Nuclear Base Open to Public

China Daily ("NUCLEAR BASE," Xining, A3, 3/5/97) reported that tourists to the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau can now visit a nuclear research base where the PRC's first atom and hydrogen bombs were produced. The "Nuclear City," located 103 kilometers from Xining, the capital of Qinghai Province, is on the list of new tourism packages promoted by Qinghai. After it closed in 1987, the base underwent strict environmental clearance tests before being transformed into the seat of government of the Haibei Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

2. PRC Military Policy

Liu Huaqing, vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission, told a group discussion attended by Army deputies during the Eighth National People's Congress that strengthening the People's Liberation Army (PLA) through science and technology is a pressing and long-term task. "The PLA must pursue a policy of maintaining a proper size with great combat readiness, optimize its organizational structure, give strategic importance to education and drilling, develop high-tech weapons, new combat theories, and strengthen discipline and administration," Liu said. He added that efforts must also be made to strengthen political and ideological education so as to improve their ability to function during a modern war. China Daily ("ARMY TO BUILD STRENGTH AND TECHNOLOGY," A2, 3/3/97)

3. Anniversary of Shanghai Communique

At a seminar in Beijing to mark the 25th anniversary of the Sino-US Shanghai Joint Communique, PRC Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen said that further progress in Sino-US relations can be made as long as the principles of the three Sino-US communiqués are observed, a PRC daily reported. Qian said at the meeting on March 3 that the key to the stable development of Sino-US relation lies in the proper handling of the Taiwan issue, the principles of which were determined by

the three Sino-US joint communiqués. Wang Jisi, director of the Institute of American Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, added that the main difficulties in current Sino-US relations are all related to the PRC's territorial sovereignty, political stability, economic development and national defense construction. Jie Feng Daily ("BEIJING HOLDS SEMINAR TO MARK SHANGHAI COMMUNIQUE," Beijing, A4, 3/4/97); People's Daily ("COMMEMORATING 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF SHANGHAI COMMUNIQUE," A3, 3/1/97)

4. ROK Cabinet Reshuffle

China Daily ("ROK CHIEF MAY DUMP MINISTERS," Seoul, A11, 3/5/97) reported that after replacing his prime minister on March 4, ROK President Kim Young-sam is likely to dump economic ministers in a cabinet reshuffle on March 5. The report speculated that six or seven economy-related ministers would go, including the ministers for Construction and Transportation, and Science and Technology. It said leading ROK newspapers were divided over whether Trade Minister Ahn Kwang-koo would hold on to his job in the face of a worrying trade deficit and criticism of the ministry's role in the Hanbo scandal.

5. Dalai Lama Visit to Taiwan

When asked to comment on the Dalai Lama's visit to Taiwan late this month, PRC Foreign Ministry Spokesman Tang Guoqiang warned in Beijing on March 4 that whatever excuse the Taiwanese authorities may use to invite the Dalai Lama to visit the island will not be conducive to the reunification of the motherland or to the healthy development of relations across the Taiwan Straits. Tang said that the political purpose of the Dalai's visit to Taiwan is evident, adding that the Taiwanese authorities are also very open about it. China Daily ("ASEAN FORUM TO START SOON IN BEIJING," A1, 3/5/97)

IV. Japan

1. Japanese Involvement in Four-Party Talks

The Sankei Shimbun ("US PROPOSES THAT DPRK SHOULD CONSULT JAPAN ON EXCHANGE OF TERRORIST INFORMATION AND ECONOMIC AID," Washington, 1, 3/3/97) reported that the US decided on February 1 to propose during the upcoming four-party talks that the DPRK should directly consult Japan on exchanges of DPRK information about its suspected terrorist activities and Japan's economic aid to the DPRK. The report also said that the US came to the decision out of fear that a Japan wary of DPRK-organized abductions may disrupt US- Japan-ROK policy toward the DPRK. According to the report, the US raised the same proposal during the US-DPRK missile talks last year, but the DPRK said only that it would consider the matter. The report predicts that the US proposal may greatly facilitate fact-finding activities related to suspected DPRK abductions.

2. Current DPRK Military Hierarchy

The Nikkei Shimbun reported that the deaths of DPRK Defense Minister Choe Kwang and his deputy Kim Kwang-jin within a week of one another are drawing international attention to the current DPRK military power structure. The report suggested that the deaths, if from natural causes, may accelerate a generational and structural change in the top ranks of the military but without change in its command and control system. The report added that early succession of the posts may indicate an established power balance within the elite while delayed succession may expose an immature power balance, just as the eight months of delayed succession to Defense Minister from O Jin-u to Choe Kwang indicated a power struggle among the elite in 1995 (Ichiro Ishikawa, "DEATHS OF TWO TOP MILITARY LEADERS MAY ACCELERATE POWER REORGANIZATION," Seoul, Evening

Edition 2, 2/28/97); Sankei Shimbun (Ruriko Kubota, "TWO DEATHS ACCELERATE GENERATIONAL CHANGE IN DPRK MILITARY," Seoul, Evening Edition 2, 2/28/97).

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("TWO DPRK MILITARY LEADERS' DEATH MAY NOT AFFECT THE STATUS QUO," 4, 3/1/97) carried an analysis by Korean Institute for Defense Analysis expert Kim Ku Sup of the possible effects on the current DPRK regime of the death of DPRK Deputy Defense Minister Kim Kwang-jin. The writer argued that it is inconceivable that Kim Kwang-jin's death was a result of a power struggle between junior and senior ranks in the military elite, because Kim Kwang-jin was a liaison between the two camps and also because he became Deputy Defense Minister after former Defense Minister O Jin-u died in 1995. Kim also suggested that candidates for Defense Minister should be closely watched, along with Kim Jong-il's official succession to power in July. Kim speculates that Marshal Ri Ul-sol is likely to become Defense Minister given that past personnel changes in the DPRK military have been conservative.

3. Ballistic/Theater Missile Defense Initiative

The Nikkei Shimbun ("JAPAN MAY POSTPONE PARTICIPATION IN BMD," 2, 3/2/97) reported that the Japanese government is struggling to decide whether to participate in the US-led Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) initiative, due to Japan's slow economy. The report pointed out that total participation estimates of 100 billion to one trillion yen have put pressure on the Hashimoto Cabinet, which also wants to maintain good Japan-US relations. The two opposing views among Japan's Defense Agency on whether to participate are (1) that participation should be decided from the viewpoint of national defense and (2) that participation should take into account Japan's projected financial restructuring. The report also pointed out that another factor delaying the decision is the PRC's concern about the possible impacts of Japan's participation in BMD on military stability in Northeast Asia.. However, the report continues, participation is too technologically attractive for Japan to refuse. The Japanese government is scheduled to make a final decision when the final results of a simulation on a cost-benefit analysis are released at the end of summer.

4. South Pacific Forum to be Held in Tokyo

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("SOUTH PACIFIC FORUM (SPF) TO BE HELD IN TOKYO FOR FIRST TIME," Evening Edition 1, 3/3/97) reported that the South Pacific Forum (SPF), consisting of 16 Pacific island countries including Australia, Papua New Guinea and Tonga, will meet in Tokyo on October 1. Although Japan is not a member country of the forum, Japan won permission to participate, according to the report. It pointed out that Japan hopes to increase its supporters for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and that SPF members anticipate Japanese economic aid in light of the South Pacific region's reduced US aid since the end of the Cold War. The report added that Prime Minister Hashimoto will make an economic commitment to the region during the prime ministerial meeting and that Hashimoto also will call for US and the international community's interest in the region.

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

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