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I. United States

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1. Rumor of DPRK Coup

Dow Jones Newswires ("WHITE HOUSE: NO INFORMATION ON UNREST IN NORTH KOREA," Washington, 03/06/98) reported that the White House said it has no information to substantiate rumors there has been political unrest in the DPRK.

[Ed. note: See item in below. KBS1 Radio Broadcast reported at 1100 GMT on March 6 that a ranking ROK government official stated that there was "no sign of a coup," and "good chances that a coup may be exaggerated." He added that it is true that there has been a delay in Japanese tourist visits to the DPRK that were planned for around now. Also, according to informed sources in Washington DC, there are no signs that would confirm or deny this rumor, although it is being watched carefully as such rumors are always, given the significance of the status of the DPRK for US security forces. If such a coup had taken place, one would expect there to be indicators related to troop movements, etc., that would indicate such an event might be underway; there are no indicators so far that the US has picked up on any such activities. [NAPSNet Editor](#)]

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2. Light-Water Reactor Project

The Associated Press ("NKOREA DENOUNCES US OVER NUKE DEAL," Seoul, 03/06/98) reported that the DPRK Foreign Ministry, in a statement carried by the official Korean Central News Agency, accused the US on Friday of not honoring terms of the 1994 nuclear agreement. It said that although the DPRK has frozen its nuclear plant, the US was not easing economic sanctions or making enough progress in the construction of the reactors. The broadcast said that some quarters were demanding that the government revive the old nuclear program. It added, "Nobody can predict what will happen unless the U.S. seeks new practical measures and takes decisive action to implement its obligations." It questioned whether the schedule to complete the first reactor by 2003 can be met as the ROK, Japan, and the US were still haggling over burden-sharing.

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3. Aid to DPRK

The Associated Press (Donna Abu-Nasr, "CONCERN OVER U.S. AID TO KOREAS," Washington, 03/06/98) reported that Republican representatives on Thursday raised concerns over food aid to the DPRK at a hearing of the Committee on International Relations called to review the government's proposed US\$7.3 billion budget for the US Agency for International Development. Representative Henry Hyde, R- Il., asked why the US "caved in" to DPRK demands that US monitors go there for only a short period of time. He stated, "Of course we want to be of help. But I don't think it's asking too much ... to monitor the spending of that (aid)." Agency head Brian Atwood responded that while the government of the DPRK is a "despicable government and they don't like us and we don't like them, ... we are responding to a humanitarian need." He added that three Korean-speaking US monitors will arrive in DPRK as the food deliveries get there next month and will stay for two weeks, but long-term monitoring of the aid program will be done by non-US citizens.

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4. ROK Weapons Purchases

Reuters ("U.S. SAYS SOUTH KOREA WANTS SHIP MISSILE SYSTEM," Washington, 03/05/98) reported that the US defense department said on Thursday that the ROK is planning to buy 12 sophisticated launch and guidance systems for Standard anti-ship missiles at a cost of US\$214

million. The US-made weapons systems would be used on missile launcher systems that would potentially be installed on warships made in the ROK. The department said that the sale would contribute to US security in the Pacific by helping improve the security of an ally.

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5. ROK Security Agency

The Associated Press (Sang-Hun Choe, "DOCUMENTS EXPOSE KOREAN SPY PLAN," Seoul, 03/05/98) reported that the ROK newspaper Hankyoreh published documents Friday supporting President Kim Dae-jung's contention that the Agency for National Security Planning conspired to harm his presidential bid by depicting him as a communist. The documents showed that former agency head Kwon Young-hae and other senior intelligence officials tried to influence the campaign. In December, the agency revealed what it claimed was a letter to Kim from an ROK religious leader who defected to the DPRK in August, which said that DPRK leaders wanted Kim to be elected as ROK president. Hankyoreh's documents showed that senior intelligence officials met regularly to use the letter to the detriment of Kim's campaign. Presidential spokesman Park Ji-won stated, "What was revealed is only part of the whole scheme." He indicated that prosecutors may question members of the Grand National Party for possible involvement.

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6. Taiwan-PRC Relations

The Washington Post (Steven Mufson, "TAIWAN TO SEND ENVOYS TO CHINA," Beijing, 03/06/98, A31) reported that Taiwan said Friday that Lee Ching-ping, deputy secretary-general of Taiwan's semi-official Straits Exchange Foundation, said that his group will send a delegation to the mainland "in the near future" to restart technical-level talks on easing tensions between the two rivals and establishing closer links in shipping, communications, and air travel. Lee said that the delegation will try to prepare the way for a visit by his group's chairman, Koo Chen-fu, and a return visit by his PRC counterpart.

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7. Taiwan Arms Buildup

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("TAIWAN PLANS TO BUILD FOUR WARSHIPS - NEWSPAPER," Taipei, 03/06/98) reported that Taiwan's China Times on Friday quoted a report by Navy Commander in Chief Hu Tsai-kuei as saying that the navy plans to build four 6,000-8,000 ton warships in the next ten years as part of its fleet modernization. The Shentun class ships would be equipped with 16 to 32 missile platforms and serve partly in an air defense capacity. It added that the ships would also be a response to recent purchases of modern Russian vessels by the PRC. However, the paper said that no budget has yet been set aside for the ships.

II. Republic of Korea

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1. Rumor of DPRK Coup

The Joongang Ilbo ("RUMORS ON DPRK COUP D'ETAT ALARM GOVERNMENT," Seoul, 03/07/98) reported that the ROK government is under alert to discover the truth behind rumors of a coup

d'etat in the DPRK, which have spread in the diplomatic community of the PRC and Japan. The government is evaluating intelligence reports regarding the possible death of DPRK leader Kim Jong-il and a coup d'etat, a government official said on March 6. He added that the DPRK military is currently under winter mobilization-drill and DPRK officials are refusing entry of foreigners into the country, so the ROK is watching closely. Kang In-duk, the new ROK Unification Minister, summoned an emergency meeting to coordinate additional intelligence acquisition and countermeasures. Rumors were also reported that a small-scale coup d'etat had been attempted by field-officers in February but was suppressed.

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2. US Military in ROK

US Department of Defense Spokesman Kenneth Bacon announced during a press briefing that the US has no plans to withdraw its armed forces from the Korean peninsula despite the DPRK's repeated demands. In addition, former Defense Secretary William Cohen had displayed the US intentions to remain in the Korean peninsula as a stabilizing force even after reconciliation of the two Koreas during his meeting with ROK President Kim Dae-jung, said Bacon. (Yonhap News, "US NOT TO WITHDRAW FROM KOREAN PENINSULA," Washington, 03/06/98)

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3. UNC-DPRK Talks

A meeting between high-level military officials of the DPRK and the UN Command (UNC) will be likely to take place later this month, an ROK government official said on March 5. The DPRK is reported to have replied positively to the UNC's recent request for the resumption of high-level military talks. DPRK and US, as well as ROK, UK, and other military generals, will attend the meeting. (Kyung-hyang Shinmun, "UNC AND DPRK TO RESUME HIGH-LEVEL TALKS," 03/06/98)

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4. ROK Policy Toward DPRK

National Unification Minister Kang In-duk said Thursday that the ROK will lift a ban on DPRK radio and television broadcasts on a phased basis as part of its efforts to improve understanding between the two Koreas. (Korea Times, Son Key-young, "SEOUL TO LIFT BAN ON NK BROADCASTS," 03/06/98)

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5. ROK-DPRK Trade Relations

The ROK government is pushing to establish a permanent trade mission in the DPRK's Rajin-Sonbong free economic trade zone, a government official said on March 5. The trade mission would represent the ROK's Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA) and would be used as meeting place for dispersed families and provide consular services for tourists. (Joong-ang Ilbo, "GOVERNMENT PUSHES FOR PERMANENT TRADE MISSION IN NAJIN-SONBONG," 03/06/98)

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6. DPRK Food Aid

A DPRK representative at the UN announced on March 5 that a delegation headed by Kim Soo-man, former vice ambassador to the UN, will be visiting the US to meet non-governmental organizations such as World Vision and Interaction. The intended meetings, scheduled to be held at the end of March between the DPRK and US aid organizations, will mark the first ever of its kind. (Yonhap News, "DPRK DELEGATION VISITS US REGARDING AID ISSUES," New York, 03/06/98)

III. Japan

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1. Japan-ROK Relations

The Sankei Shimbun ("FOREIGN MINISTER TO VISIT ROK, HOPING TO RESUME TALKS ON NEW FISHERY AGREEMENT," 03/06/98) reported that Japanese Foreign Minister Keizo Obuchi and ROK Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister Park Chung-su agreed by phone on March 5 to meet this month. Obuchi said to Park, "We do have many concerns between us, but I wish to have a close dialogue with you on how to build robust and broad partnership in the 21 century." Park said in response, "I would also like to meet you regardless of time or format. President Kim Dae-jung also emphasizes friendship between Japan and the ROK. We want to have a close dialogue and strive to solve the problems." According to the report, the Japanese government wants to find a way for resumption of the talks on a new Japan-ROK fishery agreement, which have been deadlocked.

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2. Japanese Defense Policy

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("JAPAN TO IMPLEMENT PRELIMINARY SECURITY CONSULTATION," 03/06/98) reported that, regarding the New Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation, the Japanese government decided on March 5 to exclude the provision of Japanese logistical support for US planes departing for the purpose of combat action in areas surrounding Japan. Whether or not the purpose of the departures of the US planes is direct combat action will be decided at a Japan-US preliminary consultation, which, according to the report, has not been held. The report added that prior to the decision, the Cabinet's legislation office demanded that logistical support for US direct combat action be excluded from Japan's overall logistical support for the US forces, because such support in the times of crisis on the Korean Peninsula, for example, may fall within "collective defense," which the Japanese constitution forbids.

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3. Japanese-Russian Relations

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("JAPAN-RUSSIA JOINT ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN NORTHERN TERRITORIES TO START," 03/03/98) reported that the Japanese government decided on March 2 to limit its joint economic activities in the Northern Territories [Kuril Islands] with Russia to the construction of bay and port infrastructures and accommodations, including Japanese-Russian exchange without visas, by revision or expanded interpretation of the related provisions. According to the report, the government aims to give a boost to the Japan-Russia peace treaty talks, which have been facilitated since the Japan- Russia summit meeting in November, 1997.

IV. Commentary

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1. DPRK Energy Imports

David Von Hippel, a Research Associate at the Nautilus Institute, estimates that the size of DPRK oil imports recently reported by the PRC's Xinhua News Agency seem much too small. [Ed. note: See [DPRK Energy](#) in the ROK Section of the March 5 and [DPRK-PRC Trade](#) in the US Section of the March 3 Daily Reports.] Using his 1996 estimates for gasoline and diesel imports only, and extrapolating for an average 42-day span, Dr. Von Hippel calculates DPRK gasoline imports of about 22,000 tons and diesel imports of about 14,000 tons. [Xinhua reported that the DPRK imported 134.8 metric tons of gasoline and 29.5 tons of diesel oil from the PRC between January 1 and February 11, accounting for 74 percent of DPRK oil imports in that period.] Dr. Von Hippel pointed out that, while not all of the DPRK's imports from the PRC are recorded on official ledgers, even the official imports from the PRC during the first 3 quarters of 1996 averaged about 6,600 tons per 42 days. He stated, "the amounts that they are talking about are a drop in the bucket compared to what we have estimated as the DPRK's consumption, even assuming a very reduced level of economic activity." [Ed. note: The statistical basis for Dr. Von Hippel's comments can be found in the [Annex](#) of his recent [Policy Forum Online, DPRK Energy Sector: Current Status and Scenarios for 2000 and 2005.](#)]

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.

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