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CONTENTS

I. United States

1. US Intelligence on DPRK
2. ROK-DPRK Media Exchange
3. Japanese Food Aid to DPRK
4. Cross-Straits Relations
5. Taiwan President's US Visit

II. Republic of Korea 1. UN Statement on Inter-Korean Summit
2. Inter-Korean Railway

I. United States

1. US Intelligence on DPRK

The New York Times (James Risen, "FERRETING OUT NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR SECRETS: U.S. INTELLIGENCE EXPERTS AT ODDS," Washington, 8/5/00) reported that there are disagreements between senior US diplomats and the US Defense Department's top intelligence officials over how to interpret the few hard facts available about the DPRK. Lawmakers said that the dispute had spurred them to demand an independent review of the evidence on DPRK, which the administration eventually acceded to with the appointment of former Defense Secretary William J. Perry as special adviser. Much of the debate stems from arcane arguments over photos or snippets of intelligence from agents. US State Department officials said that the US Defense Department intelligence agency has been painting far too black a picture, surmising on sketchy evidence that the DPRK has up to 10 new installations working on a covert nuclear program. The US State Department officials said that their skepticism about the quality of the Defense Intelligence Agency's work had been deepened by the inspection of the alleged nuclear site at Kumchangri, which was found to be empty. The skepticism deepened after US officials discovered that another installation that had fallen under DIA suspicion turned out to be an underground storage site for the memorabilia of the DPRK leadership. However, intelligence analysts at the DIA are said to believe that the US State Department has been

far too willing to overlook reports of suspicious activity. Several US officials said that the administration has never asked to inspect a secret installation believed to be a warhead storage site. [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for August 7, 2000.]

2. ROK-DPRK Media Exchange

The Washington Post (Sang Hun Choe, "MEDIA EXECUTIVES VISIT N. KOREA FROM SOUTH," Seoul, 8/6/00) reported that broadcasters and executives of 46 ROK newspapers visited the DPRK on August 5. The executives expected to meet with DPRK leader Kim Jong-il, who invited them during his summit with ROK President Kim Dae- jung. During their weeklong trip to the DPRK, the ROK news executives will meet with their DPRK counterparts to discuss media and cultural exchanges. The ROK journalists said in a joint statement, "We will try to develop a deeper understanding of the North Korean news media through exchanges, and we will also urge them to understand the South." ROK Culture Minister Park Jie-won, who accompanied the executives, planned to propose a joint project to send ROK tourists to the DRPK's scenic Paektu Mountain near the border with the PRC, and bring DPRK tourists to the ROK's southern resort island of Cheju. [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for August 7, 2000.]

3. Japanese Food Aid to DPRK

Agence France Presse ("JAPAN TO CHECK WHERE ITS RICE AID HAS GONE IN NORTH KOREA," Tokyo, 8/7/00) and Japan Economic Newswire ("JAPAN TO CHECK ON FOOD AID TO N. KOREA," Tokyo, 8/7/00) reported that the Japanese foreign ministry said on Monday that Japan will send a mission to the DPRK this week to see if its 100,000 tons of rice aid delivered last April had been properly distributed. The three-member mission, led by Masaharu Kono, deputy head of the ministry's Asian affairs bureau, was scheduled to tour kindergartens and nursing homes during a five-day trip to the DPRK. Japan's Vice Foreign Minister Yutaka Kawashima said that the mission was to check whether the rice aid has been delivered to its intended recipients, mainly children and the elderly. He said that so far 90,000 tons of the promised package had been shipped to the DPRK. Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Hidenao Nakagawa said, "While keeping an eye on the progress of normalization talks between Japan and North Korea and of multinational talks at the WFP, we will seriously consider" more food aid to the DPRK. Kawashima dismissed any connection between the mission and more food aid. The ministry said in a statement, "Our country is dispatching the fact-finding team as part of the so-called donor missions, comprising of aid-giving countries, which have been organized by the WFP to grasp the distribution and use of assistance goods."

4. Cross-Straits Relations

Reuters ("TAIWAN FORMS TASK FORCE TO EASE TENSION WITH CHINA," Taipei, 8/7/00) reported that Taiwanese newspapers said on August 6 that Taiwan has formed a task force to formulate a consistent policy aimed at easing tensions with the PRC. Nobel laureate Lee Yuan-tseh was named head of the 25-member group, which included members of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), the tiny opposition New Party, academics, businessmen, a pastor, a lawyer and an artist. However, the main opposition Nationalist Party and the People First Party led by James Soong refused to join and questioned the legitimacy of the task force. Lee said four seats would be reserved for the two parties in case they change their mind. The group is expected to hold its first meeting this month and will serve as an advisory body to Chen to ease tensions between Taiwan and the PRC.

5. Taiwan President's US Visit

The Associated Press ("CHINA OBJECTS TO TAIWAN LEADER TRIP," Beijing, 8/7/00) reported that the PRC objected on Monday to a planned stop in Los Angeles this month by Taiwan president Chen Shui-bian and warned the US that allowing Chen to pass through would severely damage bilateral ties. The PRC's state-run Xinhua News agency said that PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao expressed "strong resentment and firm opposition" to Chen's being given permission to stop in the US en route to Central America. Zhu called on the US to honor its commitments to the PRC regarding the Taiwan issue "to avoid severely damaging bilateral relations."

II. Republic of Korea

1. UN Statement on Inter-Korean Summit

The Korea Times (Son Key-young, "2 KOREAS TO INDUCE UN TO ISSUE STATEMENT ON S-N SUMMIT," 8/7/00) reported that ROK officials said on August 6 that the ROK and the DRPK agreed in principle to launch joint diplomatic activities to induce leaders of UN member countries to issue a special statements supportive of the June inter-Korean summit at the UN Millennium Summit, set for early next month in New York. Officials said that the DPRK's intention to launch joint diplomatic activities with the ROK was contained in a recent letter sent by DPRK Foreign Minister Paek Nam-sun to his ROK counterpart Lee Joung-binn. Appearing in a KBS television program, Lee said that he had recently received a letter from Paek. Lee said, "In the wake of the July 26 foreign ministers meeting, the first of its kind, Foreign Minister Paek recently sent a letter which would herald a remarkable progress in the two Koreas' cooperative relations in the international arena." Lee did not specify the contents of the letter, but other ministry officials said that the letter indicated the DPRK's willingness to work side by side with the ROK to induce the Millennium Summit participants to issue a statement reflecting recent developments in the inter-Korean relationship. Recalling his meeting with Paek in Bangkok, Lee said that he had conveyed a strong message to the DPRK that it is indispensable for the DPRK to alleviate the international community's concerns on its missile program, if they really wants peace and security on the Korean peninsula. Asked whether the US would shift its policies toward the Korean peninsula in the event that the Republican Party wins the upcoming presidential election, Lee said that the Republican and Democratic Parties have no differences on the principle that Korean issues should be resolved directly between the two Koreas.

2. Inter-Korean Railway

The Korea Herald (Kang Seok-jae, "MINE REMOVAL WORK IN DMZ TO PRECEDE RECONNECTION OF INTER-KOREAN RAILWAY," 8/7/00) reported that a high-ranking ROK military official said on August 6 that the ROK Defense Ministry will remove land mines in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) to facilitate the reconnection of a railroad between Seoul and Shinuiju in the DPRK. The anonymous official said that the ministry will mobilize some 1,000 soldiers belonging to two field engineer battalions and mine disposal units to clear mines on the southern part of the 4km-wide DMZ that divides the Korean Peninsula. The official said, "After consultations with the United Nations Command, we plan to start mine removal work in the DMZ as early as in mid-September." The official said the ministry is considering asking US Forces Korea for assistance in the ministry's mine-removal work. He said, "Our mine detection equipment is able to uncover metallic antipersonnel and antitank mines, but cannot detect plastic mines. That's why we would need the USFK's help." The ministry estimates that some 1 million mines are buried throughout the entire DMZ, about 100,000 of which are presumed to have been planted in the railroad restoration area.

The official said, "More mines are thought to have been buried on the northern side of the DMZ. The speed of mine- removal work will determine how long it takes to complete the planned railroad reconnection project." [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for August 7, 2000.]

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International Policy Studies Institute Seoul, Republic of Korea
The Center for Global Communications, Tokyo, Japan
Center for American Studies,
Fudan University, Shanghai, People's Republic of China
Monash Asia Institute,
Monash University, Clayton, Australia

Timothy L. Savage: napsnet@nautilus.org
Berkeley, California, United States

Gee Gee Wong: napsnet@nautilus.org
Berkeley, California, United States

Robert Brown: napsnet@nautilus.org
Berkeley, California, United States

Kim Hee-sun: khs688@hotmail.com
Seoul, Republic of Korea

Hiroyasu Akutsu: akutsu@glocomnet.or.jp
Tokyo, Japan

Peter Razvin: icipu@glas.apc.org
Moscow, Russian Federation

Chunsi Wu: cswu@fudan.ac.cn
Shanghai, People's Republic of China

Dingli Shen: dlshen@fudan.ac.cn
Shanghai, People's Republic of China

John McKay: John.McKay@adm.monash.edu.au
Clayton, Australia

Leanne Payton: lbpat1@smtp.monash.edu.au
Clayton, Australia

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Nautilus Institute
608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email: nautilus@nautilus.org