NAPSNet Daily Report 08 January, 1998

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report 08 January, 1998", NAPSNet Daily Report, January 08, 1998, https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-08-january-1998/

IN TODAY'S REPORT:

I. United States

1. Alleged DPRK Aid to Iranian Missile Development
2. US Journalist Jailed in ROK
3. ROK Financial Crisis

II. Republic of Korea

1. ROK-DPRK Relations
2. ROK Defense Budget
3. DPRK Food Aid

I. United States

1. Alleged DPRK Aid to Iranian Missile Development

The Associated Press (Harry Dunphy, "IRAN SAID TO BE BUILDING MISSILES," Washington, 01/07/98) reported that an exiled Iranian opposition group, the National Council of Resistance of Iran, said Wednesday that Iran is trying to develop a missile with the help of the DPRK, the PRC, and Russia. Alireza Jafarzadeh, a member of the council's foreign relations committee, stated, "Presently, dozens of North Korean and Chinese missile experts are stationed at the Hemat (research) complex. He said that Russians were helping Iran with thermodynamic problems and wind-tunnel tests "but North Korean involvement is substantial."

2. US Journalist Jailed in ROK

The Associated Press ("NEWSMAN IN KOREA FREE PENDING TRIAL," Seoul, 01/08/98) reported that Korean-American journalist Richard Choi was released from jail in the ROK Thursday pending trial for libel. Lee Sang-suk, a spokesman for Hankook Ilbo, whose suit led to Choi's arrest, welcomed his release but said that the paper had no plan to drop the criminal charges it has filed against him. He added, "We also want to make sure that it's a mere criminal case, not a human-rights issue as being claimed by Radio Korea." Lee said that his newspaper was considering filing a

separate civil suit seeking financial compensation. As one of the conditions of his release, Choi cannot leave the ROK until his case has been resolved. Meanwhile, the US-based World Press Freedom Committee sent a letter to ROK President Kim Young-sam, asking him to intervene to drop the charges against Choi.

3. ROK Financial Crisis

The Associated Press (Harry Dunphy, "IMF READIES NEXT S. KOREA PAYMENT," Washington, 01/08/98) reported that the executive board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) met Thursday with IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus to approve the next payment of US$2 billion to the ROK.

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("S. KOREAN OFFICIAL JOINS NEW YORK DEBT TALKS: BOK SOURCE," New York, 01/08/98) reported that Byun Yang-ho, an official in the ROK Ministry of Finance and Economy, joined international bankers at a meeting Thursday morning in an attempt to reach an agreement to alleviate the ROK's short-term debt crisis.

The Wall Street Journal (Namju Cho, "KOREANS SEE GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY TO HELP EASE NATION'S PROBLEMS," Seoul, 01/08/98) reported that the ROK has started a nationwide campaign to encourage citizens to turn in their gold, which will be melted down into bars and sold on the international market. According to the Korean Broadcasting System, about US$170 million of gold has been donated in the first three days.

II. Republic of Korea

1. ROK-DPRK Relations

Kim Ha-joon, president of the University of Inchon, at a conference hosted by the Advisory Council on Democratic and Peaceful Reunification on January 7, said that the two Koreas, both troubled by internal economic problems, are unlikely to make substantial progress in their relations this year. However, the economic challenges they face will also reduce tension on the Korean Peninsula as both focus on control of their economies. He added, "Nevertheless, we can also expect the DPRK to look outward with vigor, especially toward improving relations with the US." (Korea Herald, Kim Ji-soo, "ECONOMIC PROBLEMS TO AFFECT INTER-KOREAN RELATIONS," 01/08/98)

2. ROK Defense Budget

Facing a major budget cut, the ROK defense ministry is planning to delay or cancel big defense projects. In addition, the ministry is also set to streamline the military command structure. These and other important changes to the military were contained in a briefing made to the presidential transition team on January 7. The defense budget was originally set at about 15 trillion won but is now facing a cut of over 20 percent. Included among the programs to be suspended are the acquisition of early warning systems (AWACS) and the procurement of 1,500-ton submarines. The ROK was ready to spend US$1.6 billion and US$1 billion respectively for the AWACS and the submarines projects. One of them is the KTX-2 project that was revived last year after almost being killed. This project, an offset program of the Korea Fighter Program (KFP), is aimed at producing supersonic trainer aircraft with the help of the US defense contractor Lockheed Martin. (Korea Times, Oh Young-jin, "MAJOR MILITARY PROCUREMENT PROJECTS TO BE DELAYED OR CANCELED," 01/08/98)

3. DPRK Food Aid

The ROK government announced January 7 that it will respond to the World Food Program's (WFP)

fourth DPRK food aid plan, which aims to raise US$378 million. "We will participate in the WFP's fourth appeal for the DPRK," said Lee Jong-yeol, head of the Humanitarian Affairs Bureau at the Ministry of National Unification. Lee said that the ROK has not yet determined the size of its contribution. However, he added that the ROK government will not hurry to provide government level aid in consideration of its economic problems. (Korea Herald, "SEOUL TO CONTRIBUTE TO WFP APPEAL FOR NORTH," 01/08/98), and (Chosun Ilbo, "GOVERNMENT IN NO HURRY TO GIVE NORTH FOOD," 01/08/98)

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.

Wade L. Huntley: napsnet@nautilus.org
Berkeley, California, United States

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

Shin Dong-bom: dongbom.shin@anu.edu.au
Seoul, Republic of Korea

Choi Chung-moon: cily@star.elim.co.kr
Seoul, Republic of Korea

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

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

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

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

View this online at: https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-08-january-1998/

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