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I. United States

1. Powell on US-DPRK Relations

Agence France-Presse ("POWELL SPELLS OUT US LINE ON NORTH KOREA," Washington, 01/08/04) reported that the US will not detail security guarantees it will offer the DPRK until the DPRK proves to the outside world it has abandoned its quest for nuclear weapons, Secretary of State Colin Powell said. Powell said hopes for a new round of six-nation talks on the crisis with Pyongyang appeared to be improving, but signaled that US policy was unchanged. "We have to begin with, 'We're not going to do it and we're not going to do it in a verifiable manner,' Powell said, paraphrasing the undertaking he hoped to get from Pyongyang on its nuclear aspirations. "In return for that, we will describe the kind of security assurances we will give. And they also have to make it

clear that what they're doing is permanent, because we don't want to see this movie again," he said during a press conference. "We have very solid ideas with respect to security assurances. Then things start to flow from that, but not before." Powell's comments appeared much less upbeat than remarks earlier this week, when he said the DPRK's offer not to produce or test nuclear weapons was a "positive" step and he was "encouraged."

2. US Visit to Yongbyon Plant

Reuters (Paul Eckert, "REPORT: US TEAM LIKELY TO SEE N.KOREA ATOMIC PLANT," Seoul, 01/08/04) reported that the DPRK plans to allow a US group to visit a nuclear complex to prove it is not bluffing about its progress toward making more atomic weapons, a pro-Pyongyang newspaper and source in Japan said Thursday. The January 6-10 visit by a group that includes a nuclear scientist, congressional aides and a former diplomat comes as the US and its allies try to reopen talks with the DPRK to end its nuclear programs. The Tokyo-based People's Korea (Joson Sinbo) reported that the DPRK was expected to show the Yongbyon nuclear complex to the Americans, following through on an offer it had first made in October to US congressmen whose trip was later canceled. A diplomatic source close to the DPRK told Reuters in Tokyo the Yongbyon visit was likely because the DPRK wanted to "show how serious it is about nuclear development." "It could be the last chance before North Korea decides whether to declare itself a nuclear state and negotiate with the US," said the source, speaking on condition of anonymity.

3. ROK-Japan Relations

Asia Pulse ("S. KOREA SNUBS JAPAN'S CALL ON STAMPS FEATURING DISPUTED ISLETS," Seoul, 01/08/04) reported that the ROK responded with an immediate refusal to the Japanese government's call to exercise discretion in releasing stamps that depict islets both countries claim as their own. The state-run postal service agency said on Thursday it will release the stamps showing the Dokdo Islets as scheduled on Jan. 16. "We will send a letter of protest to the Japanese government via diplomatic channels," Korea Post Director General Park Jay-Q said. According to the Korea Post, Japan's Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications complained about the release of the stamps last September, but the dispute got attention from ROK media after Japanese newspapers reported about the issue on Wednesday. "The release of the stamps is fundamentally a matter of our own authority," Park told reporters. "Also, sales of the stamps aren't defiant of the spirit of the Universal Postal Union," he said. The stamps feature the islets of Dokdo, located between the ROK and Japan. The islets, now under control of South Korea, have been also claimed by the Japanese government and are called Takeshima in Japan. "If the Japanese government protests against the sales of Dokdo stamps via the Universal Postal Union, we will aggressively respond to it," Park said.

4. Canada on US Missile Defense Plan

Canadian Press (John Ward, "CANADA HAS UNTIL OCTOBER TO DECIDE TO JOIN US MISSILE-DEFENSE PLAN: PRATT," Ottawa, 01/08/04) reported that Canada has an October deadline to decide whether it's in or out of the US missile-defense program, Defense Minister David Pratt said Thursday. "Obviously, it has to be done before the rollout of the system in October," he said in an interview. "How long this process is going to take is anybody's guess. "It could be a matter of a few months, it could take longer." Canada has been talking with the Americans since last May about the proposed missile shield and will soon move the discussions to a new level and take a closer look at the details of the program. "The next step would be the signing of a letter of intent, which would

allow us further access to detailed US security information," Pratt said. Officials also said that missile defense will be touched on when Prime Minister Paul Martin meets US President George W. Bush in Mexico next week. Pratt said the talks have gone well, although it's not a foregone conclusion that Canada will sign on. "We aren't going down a road that has no return." He said a decision will be based on all the available data. "There's a lot of detailed technical information that we have to have access to in order to make an informed decision." Meanwhile, NDP Leader Jack Layton urged the government to say no to the missile defense plan, calling it "a profoundly dangerous idea." It will be terribly expensive, won't work and will destabilize international arms-control efforts, he said.

5. DPRK on US-ROK Military Relations

Korean Central News Agency ("DPRK COMMITTEE CRITICIZES US MOVE TO SHIP WEAPONS TO SOUTH," Pyongyang, 01/08/04) reported that a spokesman for the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland today issued a statement condemning the US for shipping latest military hardware into the ROK. This arms build-up stepped up by the US clearly proves that there is no change in its ambition to stifle the DPRK by force but it is secretly accelerating in a premeditated way the preparations for a nuclear war on the Korean Peninsula though it is paying lip-service to the "negotiated settlement of the nuclear issue", the statement says, and goes on: The DPRK's revolutionary armed forces have been trained as matchless forces capable of coping with the US "precision strike" and pre-emptive nuclear attack. It will as ever react to the US "logic of strength" with the toughest stand in order to defend the country's sovereignty and its right to existence and peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and its region. Underscoring the need for the North and the South to take joint actions against the US keen to impose a nuclear holocaust upon the Korean nation, the statement ardently calls on the compatriots from all walks of life in South Korea to turn out as one in the anti-US resistance.

6. PRC SARS Development

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA REPORTS ANOTHER SUSPECTED SARS CASE, WHO TEAM HEADS TO GUANGDONG," 01/09/04) reported that the PRC reported a new suspected SARS case after releasing its only confirmed patient, as a team of World Health Organisation experts headed to the south to find answers. Officials in the southern province of Guangdong said a 20-year-old waitress was under quarantine at a hospital in the capital Guangzhou with symptoms of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. The woman at center of the latest case, who reportedly worked at a wildlife restaurant, developed a fever on December 26 and has been hospitalized since December 31, a local government statement said. Her condition was now stable. The announcement coincided with the discharge from hospital of a 32-year-old-television journalist, the PRC's first SARS case in six months. Medical teams have disinfected the area where the waitress lived and quarantined 48 people who had close contact with her, while monitoring another 52 people who had some contact with her. None have shown SARS symptoms so far. WHO officials said Thursday they had no further information on her, but that samples from the woman were in Beijing for testing. "We'd like more information on it," said Roy Wadia, a Beijing WHO spokesman.

7. Japan on US Beef Ban

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN DENIES REPORT OF COMPROMISE ON US BEEF BAN," 01/08/04) reported that Japan's Agriculture Ministry denied a report that it was considering ending a ban on US beef imports if the product was inspected and proven to be free of mad cow disease. The Nihon

Keizai economic daily reported that Tokyo was considering accepting US beef determined to be free of mad cow disease at slaughterhouses by firms certified by the US government, but an official said no such study was underway. "There has been no specific proposal from the US government," ministry official Toshiro Kawashima told AFP. The report "is not true," he said. Kawashima said Japan would wait for a proposal from the US before making a decision on its ban. Japan, the largest export market for US beef, was the first of more than 30 countries to ban US beef imports last month after the discovery of the first US case of mad cow disease, or bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). On Thursday morning, a five-member fact-finding mission was to leave for the US and Canada, ahead of deliberations on whether Japan would lift its ban. The team would not engage in any negotiations, Kawashima said. Japan imported 333,272 tonnes of US beef and beef products in 2002, accounting for about one-third of the country's beef market, according to official data.

8. Kim Jong-il Hospitalized?

Donga Ilbo ("RUMOR OF KIM JONG-IL HOSPITALIZED," Tokyo, 01/08/04) reported that on January 8 a rumor began circulating indicating that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il entered a hospital in Pyongyang to heal his chronic enteritis back in October 2003. According to the source, in October 2003 Kim received medical treatment at Bonghwa Hospital in Pyongyang which is known to be equipped with the best medical treatment equipment and techniques. At the end of September 2003, the visit by Wu Banguo, the executive director of National People's Representative Council of China, to the DPRK was abruptly postponed at the request of the DPRK. The health condition of the leader Kim may have been aggravated at this moment, Tokyo Shimbun assessed. The decisive contents of the medical treatment have not been disclosed yet, but it appears Kim has recovered from the ailment, added the newspaper.

9. DPRK Information Technology Industry

Yonhap ("ROK OFFICIAL SAYS NORTH SEES TANGIBLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN IT INDUSTRY," Seoul, 01/08/04) reported that the DPRK achieved tangible accomplishments in the information and technology industry last year, but the ROK warned that a high-level of progress will be unlikely unless the DPRK's nuclear arms issue is resolved. The ROK's Unification Ministry, which handles inter-Korean affairs, said Thursday that the DPRK has made efforts to develop the information and technology industry as a core means of getting over its economic difficulties. The DPRK had since 2000 concentrated its efforts on developing software but shifted its focus to mobile communications, hardware and the internet, beginning last year, the ministry added. "We will aggressively expand international cooperation and exchanges in information and technology such as cultivating talented personnel and increasing technology transfer," Kim Yong-dae, vice-chairman of a standing committee of the DPRK's Supreme People's Assembly, said last December. The number of mobile phone subscribers in the DPRK, which stood at 3,000 in late 2002, jumped to 20,000 as of December last year. The country also plans to provide fixed line phones to every household within four to five years, the ministry added. Though the isolated country recognizes the need to take advantage of the internet and push forward to link it to international internet network, it still denies ordinary people access due to concerns about an influx of foreign news and information into the country. The DPRK is capable of producing 135,000 Pentium-level computers and 100,000 monitors a year in cooperation with China.

10. US on ROK Piracy

Reuters ("US CHIDES SOUTH KOREA FOR MOVIE, MUSIC PIRACY," Washington, 01/08/04) reported that the US accused the ROK on Thursday of failing to protect US-produced music and films against copyright piracy and elevated its seventh-largest trading partner to a priority watch list for intellectual property piracy. "The (Bush) administration is committed to protecting American creativity," US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick said in a statement. "The pirating of US intellectual property robs Americans and hurts those countries whose economies rely on innovation, technology, and investment." The decision to put the ROK on the priority watch list, a largely symbolic move used to convey US dissatisfaction, was based on a special review finished in late December. The investigation found that the ROK had made some progress in enforcing intellectual property protections, but had failed to move on legislation to protect sound recordings or to fulfill a commitment to resolve film piracy issues involving the Korean Media Rating Board. The International Intellectual Property Alliance, a coalition of US film, software, music and other copyright industries, had urged in October that the ROK be put on the priority watch list.

II. Republic of Korea

1. U.S State Dept: DPRK Has Highly Enriched Uranium

Chosun Ilbo (Arirang TV, "U.S. STATE DEPT: N KOREA HAS HIGHLY ENRICHED URANIUM", 01/08/04) reported that U.S. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher told reporters in a daily press briefing on Wednesday (local time) Washington "certainly knows Pyeongyang has a highly enriched uranium program." Boucher was answering a question regarding the latest report by major U.S. daily, the Washington Post on DPRK's nuclear drive. Citing U.S. officials, the Post reported in its Wednesday edition PRC told Asian diplomats last week, it is not convinced of U.S. claims that DPRK has a clandestine program to enrich uranium for use in nuclear weapons. But Boucher said he did not think that PRC doubted DPRK's possession of uranium enrichment program when DPRK has already admitted to having such a program. The admission came in October, 2002 when U.S. envoy James Kelly confronted DPRK negotiators, sparking the current nuclear crisis. Just this past Tuesday, in what it called a "bold concession", Pyeongyang offered to freeze both its nuclear weapons production and its nuclear power facility.

2. U.S Presidential Candidate Calls DPRK "Serious Threat"

Chosun Ilbo (Ju Yong-jung, Washington, "U.S. PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE CALLS NK 'SERIOUS THREAT'", 01/07/04) reported that Former Vermont governor Howard Dean, a promising presidential candidate in the U.S. Democratic Party, said Tuesday that President Bush's policy would allow DPRK to have nuclear weapons, which he called a serious threat to the national security of U.S.. Dean criticized the Bush administration's policy towards Pyongyang, in a radio debate between Democratic presidential candidates held in Des Moines University in Iowa. Dean said that President Bush is rejecting bilateral talks with DPRK, which almost definitely has nuclear weapons. The real danger is not that DPRK would immediately launch an attack against U.S., but the possibility of Pyongyang selling nuclear arms to terrorists or other countries like Libya or Pakistan to earn foreign currency, Dean said. Dean said that Bush, by rejecting bilateral negotiation with DPRK, is failing to protect national security. This is because the hard-liners against DPRK in the Republican Party have believed that DPRK would collapse, he said. If DPRK does not crumble or can produce nuclear weapons, it would be a serious threat to national security, Dean said.

3. ROK, U.S Praise DPRK's Nuclear Proposal

Joongang Ilbo (Choi Jie-ho, "SOUTH KOREA, U.S. PRAISE NORTH'S NUCLEAR PROPOSAL", 01/08/04) reported that ROK and U.S. welcomed yesterday an offer from DPRK to end all nuclear development programs, calling the proposal a positive step. Talking to reporters, ROK Foreign Minister Yoon Young-kwan said, "It is a positive sign for DPRK to talk specifically about what steps they could take. This implies their willingness to take part in the talks." The remarks followed an unusually upbeat statement from U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, who said DPRK's proposal was encouraging. "This is an interesting step on their part, a positive step, and we hope that it will allow us to move more rapidly to six-party framework talks," said Mr. Powell. DPRK's state-run Central News Agency issued a statement Tuesday that said DPRK would "refrain from testing and production of nuclear weapons." It called the offer "one more bold concession." Pyeongyang said that in return it expected U.S. simultaneously to remove DPRK from Washington's list of terrorist states, lift economic sanctions and resume energy aid. Mr. Yoon said, "It is the first time that DPRK made public such an offer in an English report, and foreign media gave it positive coverage. Thus we believe the developement will have a positive impact on resuming the six-nation talks. " Russia, PRC, Japan, U.S., ROK and DPRK have made fitful efforts to negotiate an end to Pyeongyang's nuclear arms program. The resumption of the talks has been put off several times. But Mr. Powell said, "Because we are not sitting at a table, does not mean we have not been talking to each other, and a lot of papers have gone back and forth." Mr. Yoon also said it was fair to say that informal negotiations have been going on. On Tuesday, two U.S. delegations, one academic and one congressional, began their four-day visit to DPRK and may visit nuclear facilities. The group wil be coming to Seoul on Sunday.

4. U.S. Election May Play Role In Resolving Nuclear Crisis

Joongang Ilbo (Jung Chang-hyun, "U.S. ELECTION MAY PLAY ROLE IN RESOLVING NUCLEAR CRISIS", 01/08/04) reported that The ROK Institute for National Unification, a government-run research arm devoted to peninsular affairs, has drawn up its outlook for DPRK & ROK's relations with U.S., for DPRK & ROK's relations, and for economic reform in DPRK this year. In this three-part series, the JoongAng Daily provides a summary of the report.

DPRK-U.S. relations This year's outlook for Korean Peninsula affairs largely depends on the relations between Washington and Pyeongyang, particularly with regard to the standoff over DPRK's nuclear arms development programs. Since the start of the Bush administration two years ago, DPRK and U.S. have seen no progress in improving their relations. President George W. Bush and the neoconservatives have continued to view DPRK as part of an "axis of evil," and DPRK has shown great distrust in the Bush administration. Unless such positions change dramatically, DPRK-U.S. relations this year will remain similar to last year. Dialogue will continue, but the talks are likely to face breakdowns. The six-nation talks to resolve the nuclear crisis, however, will probably anchor relations between Washington and Pyeongyang. It is likely that the six-nation talks will resume during the first half this year, but no substantial progress is expected unless either Washington or Pyeongyang makes a concession. Washington has said it will not tolerate a nuclear-armed DPRK, but has not hastened to resolve the crisis. In fact, it ignored Pyeongyang's announcements on its nuclear efforts last year. And yet, Mr. Bush may want to resolve the crisis peacefully in order to ensure his re-election in November. He may unofficially acknowledge DPRK regime, and Pyeongyang may declare its intention to give up its nuclear weapons programs first in return. That would become the turning point for stalemated DPRK-U.S. relations.

ROK-U.S. relations Relations between ROK and U.S. are likely to maintain their traditional tone of alliance. Seoul cannot downplay the importance of the U.S. role in deterring DPRK military threat on the peninsula and the attractiveness of U.S. markets from an economic point of view. Anti-Americanism will be regarded as an undesirable choice, and the alliance will be upheld. Yet, anti-

American sentiment may grow if ROK military contingent to be sent to Iraq suffers harm. Issues involving the U.S. military presence on the peninsula and protests against the U.S. Embassy's planned construction of a new embassy complex on a controversial site where cultural relics were found may also discourage an improvement in ROK-U.S. relations.

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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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