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I. United States

1. DPRK Famine Situation

US State Department Spokesman Nicholas Burns ("STATE DEPT. NOON BRIEFING, APRIL 8," USIA Transcript, 4/9/97) stated that the US may respond to the World Food Program's recent doubling of its appeal for food aid to the DPRK to 200,000 metric tons for food commodities, valued at US\$95.5 million, to help meet the DPRK's increasingly severe food shortage. Burns stated, "The United States has not made a formal decision about additional food assistance to North Korea. However, we

remain open to appeals by the United Nations humanitarian agencies. We are seriously reviewing this expanded request by the World Food Program." Burns noted Monday's announcement by Cargill Corp. that it had reached agreement with the DPRK "for an initial, modest commercial sale of wheat in the near future." Burns also defended past US responses to World Food Program appeals on behalf of the DPRK. "As you know, the United States has consistently responded positively to these requests for food assistance. We announced in late February, of course, US\$10 million in food assistance for the first appeal that was made by the World Food Program. ... Since the Fall of 1995, we've given a total of US\$18.4 million in cash and in-kind donations to the North Koreans as a response to United Nations appeals."

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Reuters ("N.KOREA TO RESPOND NEXT WEEK TO PEACE PROPOSAL," Seoul, 4/9/97) reported that an unnamed senior ROK government official said the ROK government had decided to boost its contribution to the UN World Food Program (WFP), which recently doubled its appeal for food aid to the DPRK to 200,000 tons, valued at US\$95.5 million. The ROK pledged US\$6 million to the original WFP appeal, and the US pledged US\$10 million. "We are still discussing the size of the increase. We will also have to consult with the United States," the ROK official said. "I think our humanitarian gestures will help create a better atmosphere for the talks," the official added. "I expect a favorable response from Pyongyang but I would be surprised if they agreed to the proposal with no strings attached."

The Associated Press ("1997 U.S. MULLS ADDITIONAL FOOD AID TO NORTH KOREA," Washington, 4/9/97) reported that new US food aid to the DPRK, currently under consideration, would be in addition to two shipments currently en route and due to arrive in the DPRK next month. The report quoted US State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns' comments that the US may send more food relief following the latest appeal by the UN World Food Program. Ships are now carrying US\$10 million worth of corn soy blend for children under 5 and rice and corn for victims of the floods that have destroyed farmland the past two summers. The report also noted that recent favorable responses by the DPRK to US requests to join talks on Korean peace and missile proliferation may be a result of the growing food crisis.

US Defense Department Deputy Spokesman Mike Doubleday ("PENTAGON SPOKESMAN'S REGULAR TUESDAY BRIEFING," USIA Transcript, 4/9/97), asked for the Defense Department's position regarding reports of widespread famine in the DPRK and the prospect of food aid going to

DPRK troops, stated: "First of all, I think it's widely acknowledged that there are severe food shortages which are affecting the DPRK at this point. With regard to the feeding of the North Koreans, that really is a matter that you need to talk to the State Department. I think you're well aware that we have provided some assistance in that regard, and I am not aware of any kind of modification to that."

2. Status of Four-Party Peace Talks

Reuters ("N.KOREA TO RESPOND NEXT WEEK TO PEACE PROPOSAL," Seoul, 4/9/97) reported that the DPRK has told the US and the ROK that it will respond next week to the US-ROK proposal for four-party peace talks. ROK officials said on Wednesday that senior diplomats of the two Koreas and the US were due to meet in New York on April 16 to hear the answer. "North Korea is expected to formally respond to the New York briefing last month by the United States and South Korea on the four-party talks," one official said. But in a reminder of continuing high tension, Kim Yong-chun, chief of general staff of the DPRK People's Army, told a military rally in Pyongyang on Wednesday that due to military buildups by the ROK and the US, "Our country's situation is on the brink of war, and the launching mechanism for a northward invasion is already in place."

United Press International ("S.KOREA ACCEPTS PEACE TALKS WITH NORTH," Seoul, 4/9/97) reported that ROK Foreign Ministry spokesman Lee Kyu-hyung said that the ROK is willing to attend talks with the DPRK and the US in New York next week to discuss moving forward with the proposed four-party peace talks. Lee said the ROK will stick by its position that the North should attend the four-way talks before large-scale food aid is discussed. Next week's meeting is expected to include ROK Deputy Foreign Minister Song Young-shik, DPRK counterpart Kim Kye-gwan, and US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Charles Kartman. The three sides will hold working-level discussions this Friday at New York's Waldorf-Astoria Hotel to set up next week's meeting.

US State Department Spokesman Nicholas Burns ("STATE DEPT. NOON BRIEFING, APRIL 8," USIA Transcript, 4/9/97), asked on Tuesday to clarify reports that the DPRK has requested a second high-level briefing on the joint US-ROK four-party peace talks proposal, stated that "there are no definite plans at the moment for a higher level meeting. The North Koreans have indicated to us their willingness to meet soon, to respond formally to the proposals that were made by the United States and the South Koreans. This was back in early March. I believe it was March 5th in New York, as you remember. That's what we're waiting for. We assume they're going to come back to us and say, 'Let's have another meeting.' Whether that's a briefing or whether that's a forum for the North Koreans to make a formal response to us on the proposal for Four Party talks, we'll have to see but we think it's going to be the latter. Of course, we'll remain flexible here. We want to talk to the North Koreans -- we and the South Koreans. We want to further these discussions. We want to make progress so that the Four Party talks can begin."

3. US-DPRK Missile Talks

US State Department Spokesman Nicholas Burns ("STATE DEPT. NOON BRIEFING, APRIL 8," USIA Transcript, 4/9/97) confirmed that new talks are pending with the DPRK to review its compliance with international standards governing missile sales and the safeguarding of missile technology. Burns stated: "The North Koreans have indicated to the United States their willingness to hold a second round of United States-North Korean missile talks very soon. We are currently working on the exact date and location for such a meeting, but I think it will be held quite soon. As usual, our great expert on these matters, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Robert Einhorn will head the U.S. delegation. I'm not aware who will head the North Korean delegation. The last such talks were one year ago, April 1996, in Berlin."

4. US Secretary of Defense Comments on DPRK

The Associated Press ("COHEN: FOOD CRISIS MAY PUSH N.KOREA," Seoul, 4/9/97) and Reuters ("COHEN URGES N.KOREA TO SEEK HELP WITH FAMINE," Seoul, 4/9/97) reported comments Wednesday by US Secretary of Defense William Cohen en route from Japan to the ROK on his current Asian tour. In particular, Cohen said that the worsening food crisis in the DPRK could force it to accept the US-ROK four-party peace talks proposal. "The evidence is mounting that it appears to be very severe," Cohen said of the DPRK food shortages, "and hopefully that will allow us" to go ahead with the peace talks "in the very near future." Cohen's remarks marked a shift from those earlier in the week in suggesting he is now more convinced that the DPRK food problem has become critical, and he added that the military implications of the crisis remain unclear and are a cause for concern. Cohen said it was still possible the DPRK's military might take "pre-emptive action" in response to the worsening food shortages, including "the military moving against the South. There is a whole array of contingencies that could occur, and we have no way of predicting that right now and so what we have to have is a very strong deterrent capability plus a willingness to work with the South Koreans to solve this crisis." Cohen is to spend two days in the ROK to meet with government and military officials for discussions on conditions in the DPRK, the security implications of the food crisis, and the ROK's willingness to provide food aid. He also will visit US troops and tour the Demilitarized Zone at the border with the DPRK. Cohen was to meet later Wednesday with Gen. John Tilelli, Jr., commander of all US forces in Korea, and with Gen. John Shalikashvili, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who held talks with ROK military chiefs in Seoul earlier this week.

5. US-ROK Missile Sales

Reuters ("COHEN URGES N.KOREA TO SEEK HELP WITH FAMINE," Seoul, 4/9/97) reported that US Secretary of Defense William Cohen appeared to soften his earlier warning that the ROK would be making a major military and political mistake if it bought Russian SA-12 anti-aircraft missiles instead of US Patriots. "I think that our relationship is going to remain durable without regard to the sale, should it occur," he said when asked if Seoul's purchase of Russian missiles would damage ties. "We have made the case that we would like to see greater inter-operability with our systems, but in spite of that we will continue to maintain a strong relationship with the South Koreans." Cohen earlier said that he objected to the sale because the Russian missiles might threaten US warplanes in the confusion of any new Korean war, because the Russian missiles lacked electronic safeguards that would allow them to identify US planes as friendly to the ROK.

6. Japan's Policy Towards Korean Peace

Jim Mann wrote in the Los Angeles Times ("JAPAN'S N. KOREA POLICY, BY THE NUMBERS," 4/9/97) that Japan may have deeper reasons for holding back food aid to the DPRK than those it has given, such as DPRK kidnappings of Japanese citizens two decades ago. Mann suggested that Japanese reticence to provide food aid may stem from ambivalence over the prospects of Korean unification. Mann argued that underlying population trends provide a vital clue that Japan may have an unstated interest in avoiding the emergence of a prosperous, reunified Korea that could emerge as an equal competitor. Mann cited statistics indicating that the combined Korean population was only one-third of Japan's in 1955 but is expected to be two-thirds of Japan's by 2015. Mann speculated that a unified Korea under the ROK government, with a growing population and a burgeoning economy, is not a prospect Japan welcomes, particularly given the historic animosities of the two peoples. Mann concluded, "Does the idea seem so farfetched that Japan might not be too eager for Korean reunification?"

7. Japanese Nuclear Accident

Reuters ("JAPANESE PM WANTS PROBE OVER NUCLEAR ACCIDENT," Tokyo, 4/9/97) reported that a furious Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto ordered a raid on operators of Japan's only nuclear fuel reprocessing plant on Wednesday and promised a full probe into a cover-up of the country's worst nuclear accident. "I am so angry I cannot utter a single word," Hashimoto told reporters. "We will get third-party consultants to conduct a full probe." Hashimoto's remarks came after his government ordered Science and Technology Agency inspectors to raid Power Reactor and Nuclear Fuel Development Corporation (PNC) offices. PNC is the sole public firm in charge of reprocessing nuclear fuel. PNC executives told a news conference late on Tuesday that its officials falsified a formal report about the March 11 explosion at the Tokaimura nuclear complex, which exposed 37 workers to small doses of radiation. The complex houses Japan's only nuclear fuel reprocessing plant, just 160 km (100 miles) northeast of Tokyo. No one was seriously harmed in the explosion or fallout, which reached half-way to Tokyo, but the government said it was Japan's worst nuclear accident. Although PNC had already come under severe criticism for tardiness in alerting local officials, lax fire-fighting plans and outdated equipment, the latest revelation points to a cover-up. PNC executives admitted on Tuesday they had lied that the staff had visually confirmed the original fire at the plant had been doused, as claimed in the report. The fire flared up again nine hours later causing the explosion that released radiation into the atmosphere.

II. Republic of Korea

1. DPRK Grain Purchase

The DPRK and Cargill Inc. of the US have agreed on their first wheat-for-zinc deal under which 20,000 tons of wheat will arrive in the DPRK in late May. It will be the first shipment of the 500,000 tons of grain agreed upon between the DPRK and the US grain company on March 5. Cargill's Korean office stated that the US wheat, which priced at US\$170 to US\$180 a ton, will be shipped from the US west coast in early May. Following the delivery of the wheat, the DPRK is expected to send 4,000 tons of zinc within a month. Officials from the DPRK External Trade Promotions Committee and Cargill had been negotiating since January over the grain deal, mostly over the means of payment. The US, partially bowing to the DPRK's demand for a lifting of US economic sanctions, had agreed to exchange 500,000 tons of grain in exchange for mineral ore early this year in the wake of the DPRK's apology for the Sept. 18 submarine incursion into ROK waters. International relief organizations and DPRK officials have stated that food stocks in the North will run out early next month. (Korea Herald, "NORTH KOREA, U.S.'S CARGILL IN FIRST WHEAT FOR ZINC DEAL," 04/09/97)

2. ROK-US Missile Deal

The US and Russia are vying fiercely to sell their surface-to-air missiles to the ROK in what some officials in Seoul referred to as a "missile war." The ROK anticipates spending approximately US\$1 billion to purchase US-made Patriot or SA-12 (or S-300V) ground-based anti-air missiles to defend against possible attacks from the DPRK's Scud missiles. The ROK Defense Ministry is scheduled to make the selection by September, and the US and Russia are stepping up their last-ditch lobbying. US Secretary of Defense William Cohen, due to arrive in Seoul Wednesday for a three-day visit, surprised ROK Defense Ministry officials Saturday when he strongly called on the ROK to purchase Patriots rather than Russian-made SA-12s. According to a ROK Ministry official, Cohen's comment was received as a veiled warning or ultimatum rather than a sales promotion. Cohen made the remarks after the report that Seoul was leaning toward the less expensive SA-12s. In response to Cohen, a Russian Duma lawmaker reportedly asserted Monday that the SA-12 is superior to the Patriot system, adding that "South Koreans know it very well." The ROK Ministry official also stated that the Patriot system would fit existing command and control systems without modifications, while the Russian-made SA-12 would need significant modifications and has an incompatible IFF

(identification of friend or foe) system. Regarding the incompatibility, the official noted that the US has warned the United Arab Emirate that US military aircraft will not fly in its airspace if it acquires Russian SA- 12s. A proponent of the Patriot system, he stated that "in addition to price, we should take into consideration such points as operations and support costs, reliability and amount of equipment.". A Defense Ministry source denied the news report that the ROK was leaning towards the Russian-made missiles. (LSY) (Korea Herald, "US, RUSSIA VYING TO SELL ANTIAIR MISSILES;SEOUL TO SPEND \$1 BILLION ON EITHER PATRIOT OR SA-12," 04/0797)

3. DPRK-Taiwan Nuclear Waste Deal

ROK Environmental Minister Kang Hyon-wook has sought firm support from the international community for the ROK's effort to stop the planned nuclear waste shipment from Taiwan to the DPRK. "Korea sincerely hopes that the international community will share our concerns and will make joint efforts to have such an unjustifiable deal revoked," Kang stated in a speech to the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) in New York on Tuesday. Kang added the planned nuclear waste shipment should give the international community special cause for alarm and concern as it poses a threat to environmental and human safety and contravenes established international practices. A Taiwanese company signed a contract with the DPRK in January to export 60,000 barrels of radioactive waste over the next two years with the option of making an additional shipment of 140,000 tons. Despite the outcry from the ROK, Taiwan and the DPRK have been pushing for the nuclear deal, arguing that it had been commercially arranged. "It is ethically unjustifiable to exploit a financially-strapped developing country by inducing it to destroy its own environment," Kang told delegates to the CSD session, which opened Tuesday for a three-day run. He indicated the planned nuclear shipment goes against the principles of the declaration on nuclear waste adopted at the environmental summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The principles require that nuclear waste be disposed at its source, thus prohibiting transboundary movement of waste to a country lacking adequate disposal facilities and without prior notification to and consultation with potentially affected states. (Korea Herald, "SEOUL SEEKS INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT AGAINST TAIWAN-NORTH KOREA DEAL," 04/09/97)

4. DPRK Refugees

About 1,500 people have fled from the DPRK and are currently staying in the PRC and Hong Kong. Of this group, approximately 500 wish to enter the ROK. Deputy unification minister Kim Suk-woo stated yesterday at a meeting of the ROK National Assembly Unification and Foreign Affairs Committee that "An average of 50 North Korean defectors have arrived in the South each year since 1994. Their number surged sharply recently and 18 defected to the South so far this year." Deputy minister Kim also stated that DPRK refugees will find it difficult to settle in the South unless government-level measures are devised to help them as the PRC has legalized cracking down on refugees through a recent revision of the nation's criminal law. In addition, with the transfer of Hong Kong to the PRC on July 1, the defection route through the city-state could be closed. Kang added that the ROK will step up diplomatic efforts with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) under the principle of accommodating every DPRK defector who wishes to come to the ROK. Kang also stated that the government will speed up the construction of a settlement facility for DPRK refugees through an early revision of related laws. The ROK's assistance for the refugees will focus on enhancing their social adaptability rather than on giving one-time material support. (Joong Ang Ilbo, "1,500 NORTH KOREA REFUGEES STAYING IN CHINA, HONG KONG," 04/09/97)

III. People's Republic of China

1. ROK Economy

China Daily ("GLOOMY FORECAST," Seoul, A5, 4/3/97) reported that the growth of gross domestic product (GDP) of the ROK would fall to 4.7 percent from last year's 7.1 percent based on a prediction by Daewoo Economic Institute. It added that the Samsung and LG economic institutes' earlier released forecasts of GDP growth were 5.0 per cent and 5.7 percent, respectively.

2. ROK Diplomacy

Due to its political, economic, and geographic conditions, the foremost aim of ROK foreign policy should be to seek a balance point among its relations with all major powers in Northeast Asia, stated Pu Ping, a staff member of the International Politics Department of People's University of China, in the first issue of this year's Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies (Bimonthly). After stressing the importance of economic considerations in the ROK's foreign policy, Pu stated that the significance of the ROK's military alliances with the US and Japan have been reduced, although its primary ties are still with these two countries. The article, titled "ROK's Diplomacy Under New Situation," said that the US, Russia, the PRC, and Japan have reached consensus on maintaining peace and stability in this area but that they have different perceptions on issues related to Korean reunification and what nation will play a dominant role in East Asia.

3. PRC-DPRK Relations

DPRK Vice President Li Jong Ok stated on April 3, in a meeting with new PRC Ambassador to Pyongyang Wan Yongxiang, that it is beneficial for both the DPRK and the PRC to consolidate and develop their friendship ties. Li stated that the DPRK Workers' Party, government, and people will, as always, cherish the DPRK- PRC friendship and will make constant efforts to develop it. People's Daily ("LI JONG-OK EMPHASIZES DEVELOPMENT OF DPRK- CHINESE FRIENDSHIP," Pyongyang, A6, 4/4/97)

4. PRC-Japanese Relations

When meeting with guests from Japan's Sumitomo Corp, led by the company's president, Miyahara Kenji, PRC President Jiang Zemin reaffirmed the principles guiding PRC-Japanese relations. In the talks on April 7, Jiang emphasized the need to "square up" to history and look into the future. Jiang called for close attention to the development of bilateral relations from a strategic point of view. Wen Hui Daily ("JIANG ZEMIN MEETS WITH JAPANESE GUESTS," Beijing, A7, 4/8/97)

5. US Defense Secretary's Visit to Japan

Jie Fang Daily ("US, JAPAN REACH AGREEMENT ON US TROOPS IN JAPAN," A4, 4/9/97) reported that US Defense Secretary William Cohen and Japanese Defense Agency Chief Fumio Kyuma agreed to maintain the present level of US military personnel in Japan. According to Japanese officials, this agreement was reached on the evening of April 7.

China Daily ("DEFENCE TALK," Tokyo, A11, 4/8/97) reported that US Defense Secretary William Cohen, while visiting Japan, was to seek assurances of "non-combat" support from Japanese forces in a Korean conflict and to urge Japan to join the US's costly missile defense initiative.

6. The Okinawa Issue

An article on Jie Fang Daily ("JAPANESE CABINET FACES A RESHUFFLE," A4, 4/4/97) reported that the Okinawa issue may cause a cabinet reshuffle in Japan. In order to assure the approval of the land law revision bill by the Japanese Diet, Japan's Liberal Democratic Party will cooperate with the opposition New Frontier Party and forsake its current political partner known as the Social Democratic Party.

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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](#).

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