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I. United States

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1. Rumors of DPRK Unrest

The Associated Press ("S. KOREA: NO EVIDENCE OF UNREST," Seoul, 03/07/98) and Reuters "CURFEW SLAPPED ON PYONGYANG AFTER GUNFIGHT-PAPERS," Seoul, 03/06/98) reported that Chung Dae-kyu, a chief DPRK analyst in the ROK Unification Ministry, said Saturday that the ROK has found no evidence to support rumors that circulated in diplomatic circles in the PRC that the DPRK imposed a curfew on Pyongyang after fighting broke out between police and military forces there. Chung stated, "We have been trying to check those rumors out. But so far we have found no signs of unusual movements in the North." The ROK daily Dong-A Ilbo reported Saturday that troops with the DPRK police force attacked army soldiers in Pyongyang on Tuesday. The paper quoted an unidentified diplomatic source in Beijing as saying that authorities placed Pyongyang under curfew and that soldiers beefed up security around major government buildings after the alleged disturbance. Meanwhile, monitoring agencies in the ROK and Japan reported Saturday that nothing

had been broadcast by DPRK television or radio on the rumored unrest. The Tokyo-based monitoring service, Radiopress, said on Saturday there had been no breaks in DPRK official media broadcasts as of 11.00 am on Saturday. An unnamed official at the UN Command in Seoul stated, "There have been a lot of various similar rumors about unrest in North Korea that later turned out to be groundless. We have no official comment on these reports, although I personally think these reports were also such rumors."

The Washington Post (Kevin Sullivan, "REPORTED N. KOREAN CLASH KEEPS OFFICIALS BUSY," Tokyo, 03/08/98, A28) reported that Stephen Bosworth, US ambassador to the ROK, was called back to the embassy after-hours and ROK intelligence officials worked through the night to investigate reports of a clash Thursday among DPRK troops in Pyongyang. ROK officials said the fighting, if it took place, could have been part of military training exercises or some other routine event. One unnamed official stated, "There was something, but whatever it was seems to be over and there are no signs that indicate any change in leadership. A lot of people put a lot of time into trying to figure out what this was, but everyone's pretty calm now."

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2. DPRK Food Aid

United Press International ("S.KOREA PLEDGES FOOD FOR NORTH," Seoul, 03/09/98) and the Associated Press ("S. KOREA TO SEND AID TO N. KOREA," Seoul, 03/08/98) reported that an official from the ROK Unification Ministry said Monday that the ROK has pledged 50,000 tons of food for the DPRK. The official stated, "Abiding by the policy direction of the president, who has called for expansion of aid to the North, we have pledged this food." A ministry spokesman said the aid was worth US$9-10 million. He added that the ROK expects the World Food Program will deliver the food in late April or early May.

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3. ROK-Japan Fisheries Talks

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("JAPAN, S. KOREA FOREIGN MINISTERS TO MEET ON FISHING RIGHTS," Seoul, 03/09/98) reported that ROK Foreign Ministry officials said Monday that Kazuo Ogura, Japanese ambassador to the ROK, proposed Monday in a meeting with new ROK Foreign Affairs Minister Park Chung-soo, that the foreign ministers of the two countries meet next week to renew talks on fishing rights. The officials said that Park welcomed the proposal. However, they added that the exact date and site of Park's meeting with Japanese Foreign Minister Keizo Obuchi have not been determined.

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4. Taiwanese Diplomacy

The Associated Press ("TAIWAN VP PROMOTES DIPLOMATIC TIES," Taipei, 03/07/98) reported that Taiwan Vice President Lien Chan said Saturday that Taiwan has conducted a "strategic dialogue" with Malaysia and increased Taiwan's profile in the Middle East. Lien stated, "Short of establishing diplomatic ties, all other channels of communications are there and remain open with" Malaysia.

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5. Taiwan Cancels Military Exercises

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("TAIWAN CANCELS FRIGATES DISPLAY TO APPEASE CHINA - REPORT," Taipei, 03/09/98) reported that Taiwan's Independence Evening Post said Monday that Taiwan will put off a ceremony to commission a squadron of six French-made Stealth frigates to avoid provoking the PRC. Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui had been scheduled to preside over a ceremony next week to formally put the Lafayette-class frigates into service. The paper quoted unidentified military officials as saying that the decision was made after former US national security adviser Anthony Lake urged Taiwan during a meeting with Defense Minister Chiang Chung-ling last week to freeze any provocative military exercises.

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6. Taiwanese Independence

The Washington Post carried an opinion article by Joseph S. Nye Jr., dean of Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and a former assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs ("A TAIWAN DEAL,"03/08/98, C07) which called on the US to clarify its policy on Taiwan. The article said, "The 1972 Shanghai Communique recognizing the existence of one China was calculatingly ambiguous on the subject of Taiwan.... If we leave these ambiguities in place, we may court disaster." The author warned that, should Taiwan declare independence, "it would create serious dangers for Taiwan's impressive democratic freedoms and successful market economy." He argued that "A three-part package -- either negotiated or carried out by simultaneous unilateral declarations from Washington, Beijing and Taipei -- could preserve these freedoms in Taiwan while reducing the significant risks in the present circumstances." He stated that the first part of the package be a clear statement from the US that its policy is "one China" and "no use of force," and that it would not recognize or defend a Taiwanese declaration of independence. The second part of the package would be a statement by the PRC that if Taiwan would "decisively reject the idea of declaring independence," the PRC would allow greater breadth for Taiwanese diplomacy. The third part of the package would be for Taiwan "to explicitly express its decision to forswear any steps toward independence, to intensify the cross-strait dialogue, and to stimulate greater flows of investment and exchanges of people across the strait." The author argued that, "Such an initiative would reduce the current risks of a crisis that is not wanted by any of the three parties but that could be explosive in the context of the current ambiguity in American policy." He concluded, "If the simultaneous preservation of democracy and peace is the real moral problem confronting practical policymakers, this modest proposal can claim the high ground."

II. Republic of Korea

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1. Light-Water Reactor Project

Security-related ministers agreed in a meeting on March 7 to contribute to the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) project with materials and labor instead of foreign currency in consideration of the ROK's shortage of foreign currency. An ROK government official said that the ROK will notify officials from Japan and the US about the decision during a meeting of KEDO executive members, which is expected to be held in New York later this month." During the meeting, the first of its kind since President Kim Dae-jung's inauguration late last month, the ministers also agreed to hold regular meetings to coordinate security-policies under the National Security Council presided over by the President, the official said. (Korea Herald, "SEOUL PLANS TO CONTRIBUTE LABOR, MATERIALS TO KEDO," 03/09/98)

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2. ROK Diplomatic Reshuffle

The ROK government ordered 107 ambassadors to submit their resignations on March 8 in preparation of a major reshuffle in the diplomatic corps. After receiving the resignations, the government will proceed to appoint new ambassadors to overseas missions. In addition, thirty-eight deputy-minister-level appointments were announced on March 8, indicating that a major change is underway in the administration, within which 7,162 government posts have been abolished. (Chosun Ilbo, "OVERSEAS MISSION CHIEFS SUBMIT RESIGNATIONS," 03/09/98)

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3. ROK Military Reform

New ROK Defense Minister Cheon Yong-taek has promised a sweeping reform of the Armed Forces, including personnel appointment and procurement procedures. In his appearance on a Korea Broadcasting System's news program on March 6, Minister Cheon said the Armed Forces should adopt a "corporate mind" in their management. (Korea Times, Oh Young-jin, "NEW DEFENSE CHIEF PROMISES SWEEPING REFORM," 03/07/98)

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.
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Yonsei University, Seoul, Republic of Korea
The Center for Global Communications, Tokyo, Japan
Fudan University, Shanghai, People's Republic of China

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@wisenet.co.kr
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

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