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I. United States

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1. ROK Labor Unrest

The Associated Press (Kyong-Hwa Seok, "TALKS REOPEN IN HYUNDAI STRIKE," Seoul, 08/10/98) reported that management and union negotiators met Monday to try to settle a three-week strike at the ROK's Hyundai Motor Co. The union has proposed a reduction in working hours or a work-sharing program to avoid layoffs, but the company has rejected that as a makeshift solution. Meanwhile, the government was reportedly ready to use police to break up the strike.

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2. ROK Floods

Reuters (Nick Yon, "HEAVY RAINS LASH S.KOREA AGAIN; DEATH TOLL AT 234," Seoul, 08/10/98) reported that the ROK was hit with heavy rains again on Monday. The flooding resulting from the rains has left 234 people dead and 91 missing nationwide, along with more than 116,000 people homeless. An unnamed disaster agency official stated, "Heavy rains in northern areas outlying Seoul are hampering relief and search operations." Lee Sung-tae, a central Bank Of Korea official, said that, due to the flooding, the ROK's gross domestic product could contract even more than the four

percent this year projected by the government and the International Monetary Fund. Local media reports said ROK military units had lost 10 tons of mines and other munitions in the floods. A US military statement said that the death toll included three US soldiers.

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3. US-Japan Relations

US Department Of State Deputy Spokesman James B. Foley ("STATE 8/7 ON UPCOMING VISIT OF JAPAN FOREIGN MINISTER," USIA Text, 08/07/98) announced Friday that Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura will visit Washington on August 14 to meet with Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright. The statement said, "They will discuss bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest, including the economic and fiscal policy measures announced today by Prime Minister Obuchi."

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4. Japanese Politics

Agence France-Presse (Shingo Ito, "JAPAN'S OPPOSITION DEMANDS SNAP ELECTIONS," Tokyo, 08/10/98) reported that the main opposition Democratic Party of Japan demanded on Monday that Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi immediately call elections for the lower house of parliament. Kansei Nakano, deputy head of the Democratic Party, argued, "The Obuchi administration does not reflect the people's will." Obuchi responded, "Our priority is to revive the financial sector reform. Therefore, I don't have dissolution in my mind." He added, "I will listen to proposals prepared by the opposition groups and aim to enact laws as soon as possible by seeking their understanding and cooperation."

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5. Asian Financial Crisis

The Washington Post (Sandra Sugawara, "BAD ECONOMIC NEWS HITS ASIAN CURRENCIES," Tokyo, 08/08/98, D01) reported that Hong Kong Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa pledged to keep the Hong Kong dollar pegged to the US dollar despite drops in the Japanese yen and other Asian currencies. Meanwhile, black-market exchange rates in the PRC fell below 9 yuan to the dollar on Friday, compared with the official rate of 8.28 yuan to the dollar.

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6. US Satellite Exports to PRC

The Washington Post (John Mintz, "HUGHES CORP. PRESSING WHITE HOUSE TO CLEAR NEW DEAL WITH CHINA," 08/09/98, A12) reported that Hughes Electronics Corp. is intensely lobbying the Clinton administration for permission to proceed with a new telecommunications satellite deal with the PRC. Hughes has argued that the satellite would carry mostly civilian telephone connections across Asia and would offer only slight benefit to the PRC military. However, some US Department of Defense officials have pointed out that six Chinese companies, including some tied to the PRC military, control most of the stock in the satellite venture and would oversee the spacecraft's operations in handling mobile telephone calls for the PRC and 21 other Asian countries. Critics have said that it would help the PRC military address weaknesses in command and control and to eavesdrop on calls placed through the satellite.

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7. Indian Naval Development

Reuters ("INDIA LAUNCHES WARSHIP, PLANS AIRCRAFT CARRIER," Calcutta, 08/10/98) reported that Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes on Monday commissioned a new warship into the navy. The warship is armed with long-range sea-skimming missiles and can carry attack helicopters. Fernandes also said that the government would soon make a decision to build an indigenous aircraft carrier. He added that while military and economic sanctions imposed by the US after India's nuclear tests would delay some defense projects, India would seek alternative sources of technology. He stated, "Our army's equipment, our air force and navy's equipment has overwhelmingly been from Russia and it remains (as such)."

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 in partnership with:
The Center for Global Communications, Tokyo, Japan
Center for American Studies,
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

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