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I. United States

1. DPRK Nuclear Plant Construction Talks

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will include discussion on various issues, including membership of the European Union in the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), the international consortium set up to build two light-water reactors in the DPRK. The meeting also will discuss the dispatching of a survey team expected later this month, ministry officials said. Stephen Bosworth, KEDO Director, has said construction on the reactors would begin in April.

2. Four-Party Talks Briefing and DPRK Food Aid

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The Associated Press ("U.S., SEOUL MAY AID N. KOREA," Seoul, 2/7/97) reported that the Hankyoreh Shinmun quoted an unidentified ROK official as saying that the US and the ROK may agree on large-scale food aid to the DPRK to clear the way for regional peace talks. The official was reported to have said that such aid could be approved when US and ROK officials meet in Washington next week. Such an agreement would mark a policy shift by the ROK, which has objected to using food to entice the DPRK into the talks. The comments could not be confirmed independently, as government offices were closed today for a national holiday.

3. Food Aid to DPRK

US Presidential Press Secretary Mike McCurry (WHITE HOUSE DAILY BRIEFING, FEBRUARY 7," USIA Transcript, 2/10/97) said that the US anticipates that the UN will issue a general appeal next week for humanitarian aid for the DPRK. McCurry said: "We will consider it as we always do in the case of humanitarian appeals. Last year, I think, we ended up providing about US\$8.2 million in response to an international appeal from an authorized international organization. And I think,

again, pending the formal request for humanitarian assistance, we would certainly take it on board as we did last year. We're not aware that there are any significant disagreements with that approach with respect to our very close ally, the Republic of Korea. And we would clearly consult closely with the Republic of Korea on such a matter." Asked to compare today's situation to last year's, McCurry said: "I think that there is evidence that in some respects the condition has worsened as far as famine and food shortages. They, of course, have been facing some natural conditions that have exacerbated that, but they also have to deal with the inevitable consequences of having a command and control economy that does not allocate resources in a way that can provide, in this case, basic sustenance to citizens of the country."

The Washington Post carried an editorial by Andrew Natsios ("FEED NORTH KOREA; DON'T PLAY POLITICS WITH HUNGER," 2/9/97, C01). [Ed. note: Andrew Natsios is a former assistant administrator of the US Agency for International Development, and ran US famine relief efforts during the Bush administration.] Natsios wrote that "a potentially deadly game of famine roulette" is emerging from the domestic and international politics of providing food aid to the DPRK. Natsios asserted that the political tussling has prevented US government relief officials from making serious efforts to address the famine now spreading across the DPRK, which could result in "the mass starvation of hundreds of thousands of people who have no political or military power." Natsios argued that current US policy eviscerates the position not to "use food as a weapon" that the US has held "since Herbert Hoover helped feed Europe after World War I," and that was most recently upheld by Ronald Reagan's decision to overrule his advisors and send food aid to Ethiopia in the 1980s. Natsios charged that the Clinton administration has made no comparable effort to go to Congress and build a bipartisan consensus on food aid to the DPRK, and that only recently have officials even admitted the severity of the crisis the DPRK now faces. "The evidence is clear that North Korea is looking at a shortage significantly more severe than the one that led to the deaths of a million people in Ethiopia in 1984-85," Natsios wrote. Natsios pointed out that through such actions as arresting as spies an ROK transport crew bringing humanitarian food aid north after the first floods, the DPRK "has long been its own worst enemy." But Natsios also argued that US inaction is due to ROK lobbying that has convinced traditional supporters of famine relief in the US Congress not to support aid to the DPRK. The author wrote: "US inaction has also kept other sources of relief on the sidelines. In ordinary circumstances the US government -- through the Agency for International Development -- would have initiated a major famine aid program, usually matched by the Canadians and Europeans. In virtually every famine since Ethiopia, the United States has contributed one-third of the total food requirement -- frequently more. That is what we should be doing now. We can find other ways of getting the North to the bargaining table. And our contribution must be substantial, not the token 20,000 to 30,000 tons we gave last year." Natsios attributed the DPRK-Taiwan nuclear waste deal to DPRK desperation to feed itself, and argued that the ROK, the US, and Japan all have strong, pragmatic interests in providing much more generous aid. Natsios concluded, "if the famine initiates a chain of explosive events, our diplomacy may be putting another group of people at risk -- the 37,000 American troops in South Korea."

4. DPRK Accused of Old Japanese Kidnapping

The Associated Press (Braven Smillie, "JAPAN POL PROBES 1977 VANISHING," Tokyo, 2/7/97) reported that Japanese opposition legislator Shingo Nishimura told a parliamentary hearing last week that DPRK agents may have abducted a Japanese girl 20 years ago. Nishimura says the girl, Megumi Yokota, who vanished in November 1977 while walking home from her junior high school, may have witnessed a DPRK spy getting ready to leave Japan for home. Nishimura also said that he has obtained research periodical reports on testimony by a DPRK agent, who may have heard Yokota's story before defecting to the ROK, indicating she might still be living in the DPRK. Details of the story matched what is known about Yokota's disappearance. Prime Minister Ryutaro

Hashimoto promised that the government will redouble efforts to solve the suspected kidnapping of Yokota and of three young Japanese couples who also disappeared in 1978. [Ed. note: Please see related item in the Japan section, below.]

II. Republic of Korea

1. DPRK-Taiwan Relations

Taiwan's plan to send nuclear waste to the DPRK has accelerated contacts between two countries on opposite ends of the ideological spectrum, building on their shared feeling of diplomatic isolation and common economic interests. ROK officials state that Taiwan-DPRK ties will be limited by their giant neighbor, the PRC. But the expanding relations between Taiwan and the DPRK are certainly giving them some leverage over the ROK and the PRC, which had buried their past enmity and set up diplomatic ties in 1992. Taiwan and the DPRK watched helplessly as their traditional allies developed a close partnership with their arch rivals. It may be natural that Taiwan and the DPRK, feeling betrayed over the rapid Seoul-Beijing rapprochement, have sought to expand their ties. The DPRK, which now operates a tourist promotion office in Taipei, is pushing to open an economic and trade office there. Quoting unidentified DPRK officials, a Taiwanese daily reported that the DPRK would send two delegates later this month to set up a representative office in Taipei. A recent ROK press report stated that Taiwan is planning to provide up to US\$1.5 billion of economic aid and investment to the DPRK, although a Seoul official dismissed the figure as "unrealistic." The beginning for the improvement of Taiwan-DPRK relations came in 1995 when Taiwan provided fertilizer and other relief goods to the flood-hit DPRK. The two sides also exchanged several trade missions last year. Late last year, a Taiwanese provincial delegation traveled to the DPRK, where DPRK officials requested that Taiwan provide 200,000 tons of rice to help ease an acute food shortage in the country. Taiwan later sent 25,000 tons of rice worth US\$7 million to the DPRK. A 30-member group of Taiwanese businessmen also participated in an international investment forum the DPRK arranged last year to promote foreign investment in its Rajin-Sonbong economic and trade zone. An official at the ROK Foreign Ministry stated that Taiwan, with a huge foreign exchange reserve, does not want to go behind the ROK, Japan, and other countries in exploiting potential business opportunities in the DPRK. However, the ROK official did not rule out the possibility that Taiwan would soon have the same level of representation in the DPRK as in the ROK. The ROK, formerly longtime allies with Taiwan, in 1992 severed diplomatic ties with Taiwan in order to obtain ties with the PRC; the two have since maintained an unofficial mission in each other's capitals. But the ROK official also said it is "unthinkable" for the DPRK to form political and diplomatic ties with Taiwan beyond the economic domain in defiance of the PRC's opposition. Reports stated that the PRC has sent an implicit message to the DPRK expressing concern over its approach toward Taiwan and that, in response, the DPRK has shown an intractable attitude. Taiwan and the DPRK may well regard improving bilateral ties as a means of checking both the ROK and the PRC. Some analysts here say that the PRC's massive aid for the DPRK last year may have been prompted by the DPRK's expansion of deals with Taiwan. The nuclear waste disposal deal between Taiwan and the DPRK may be a test of how far they would go against the PRC as well as the ROK. (The Korea Herald, Kim Kyung-ho, "PYONGYANG, TAIPEI SEEN TO SHARE FEELING OF DIPLOMATIC ISOLATION IN NUCLEAR-WASTE CASE," Seoul, 02/10/97)

2. ROK-Canada Nuclear Talks

According to the ROK Foreign Ministry, the ROK and Canada will hold two sets of meetings on nuclear energy and international aid cooperation in Ottawa next Monday. During the 14th annual meeting of the ROK-Canada Joint Coordinating Committee on Nuclear Energy, the two sides will discuss joint participation in nuclear projects in third countries and cooperation in nonproliferation and enhancement of nuclear safety. Both sides, in particular, will address Taiwan's controversial

plan to send nuclear waste to the DPRK and matters concerning the DPRK's nuclear program. During the meeting, which will continue through Wednesday, they will also discuss implementation of 17 joint nuclear projects in such fields as radioactive waste management and nuclear fuel development. The ROK, which operates a Canadian-designed nuclear plant, has been holding nuclear cooperation meetings with Canada since 1983. The two countries will review their respective international aid policy and exchange views on global trends at a separate one-day meeting. During Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien's visit to Seoul last month, the two sides agreed to resume bilateral talks on assistance to developing countries, first held in Seoul in 1994. As part of follow-up measures to an aid cooperation agreement signed during Chretien's visit, the ROK will propose a joint program for training officials from developing countries in environmental areas. Ju Chul-ki, the ROK foreign ministry's director general for international economic affairs, will head the ROK delegations to the two meetings. Canada will be represented by Ralph Lysyshyn, director-general for international security at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, at the nuclear meeting, and John Robinson, vice president of Canada's International Development Agency, at the aid meeting. (The Korea Herald, "KOREA, CANADA TO HOLD MEETINGS ON NUKE ENERGY," Seoul, 02/10/97)

3. Japan-DPRK Relations

Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) on Friday decided to shun top-level contact with a visiting senior DPRK official unless Pyongyang changes its mind about the four-party peace talks proposal. "People in the party's responsible positions will refrain from such meetings," LDP secretary-general Koichi Kato told a news conference. Hwang Jang-yop, a secretary of the DPRK's ruling Workers Party, is visiting Japan on a two-week visit to attend an academic seminar as the head of a delegation. An authority on the DPRK's guiding doctrine of "juche" or self-reliance, Hwang is regarded as a close adviser to DPRK's top leader Kim Jong-il. He also heads the foreign affairs committee of the Supreme People's Assembly, the DPRK's legislature. Hwang could have used the visit to contact Japan's ruling party leaders and request additional rice aid to help ease his country's food crisis. Taku Yamasaki, head of the LDP's policy research council said Hwang, who is also chairman of the Korean Association of Social Scientists, had informally requested a meeting with him. Japan had suspended official talks on normalizing diplomatic ties with the DPRK in November 1992 after raising the issue of a Japanese woman allegedly abducted to the DPRK to train spies there. (The Korea Times, "JAPAN'S RULING PARTY SHUNS MEETINGS WITH DPRKN OFFICIAL," Seoul, 02/10/97)

4. Russian Military Reform

The top two defense officials planning far-reaching reform of Russia's bloated and cash-strapped armed forces showed signs of disagreement Friday despite efforts to present a united front. After widespread media reports that Russian Defense Minister Igor Rodionov and Defense Council Secretary Yuri Baturin were divided over how to implement the costly and long-delayed reform, the two stressed Friday that they were coordinating their approaches to the problem. However, their differences of view, which have exacerbated the delay in launching military reform, still emerged at a recent news conference. "We differ over how to resolve certain technical problems," Rodionov admitted. Baturin called for military personnel cuts starting before the year 2000, with "wholesale modernization of the army's equipment not starting before 2005." He also stated that "In present conditions, a large-scale war is unlikely." However, Rodionov argued that a reduction of military personnel must be accompanied by the provision of modern weapons, and he hit back at Baturin by stating that the army "must be ready to fulfill a combat mission" and "counter a possible military threat." Rodionov has demanded extra funding for the army, arguing that without it the much-needed reform would be stillborn. Russia's 1997 national defense budget, which outlines the total

defense spending at 108 trillion rubles (US\$21.7 billion), will only satisfy two-thirds of the army's minimum needs, defense ministry spokesman Anatoly Shatalov stated last week. (The Korea Times, "DEFENSE CHIEFS' DISAGREEMENTS HOLD UP RUSSIAN ARMY REFORM," Seoul, 02/10/97)

III. Japan

1. KEDO Executive Director's Interview

Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) Executive Director Stephen Bosworth, who is visiting Japan, told the Yomiuri Shimbun ("KEDO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SAYS JAPAN PLAYS LARGE FINANCIAL ROLE IN LIGHT WATER REACTOR CONSTRUCTION (LWR)," 3, 2/6/97) that the DPRK's recent apology for the submarine incursion incident led KEDO to decide to send a survey team later this month to restart preliminary work on LWR construction. With regard to sharing construction costs of approximately US\$5 billion, he confirmed that Japan already decided to take a "meaningful role" while the ROK would continue to take a "central role." He also said that, although the ROK's share is larger than that of Japan, he expects that Japan's contribution will be considerable.

2. DPRK Workers' Party Head Interview

The Nikkei Shimbun ("DPRK LABOR PARTY HEAD DENIES DPRK'S CONNECTION TO SUSPECTED ABDUCTION OF JAPANESE GIRL," 8, 2/7/97) and the Yomiuri Shimbun ("DPRK WORKERS' PARTY HEAD SAYS DPRK TRYING HARD TO OVERCOME FOOD CRISIS AND THANKS INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY FOR SUPPORT OF DPRK CITIZENS," 4, 2/6/97) interviewed DPRK Workers' Party Secretary General Fang Chang Fa on February 5 and 6 respectively. Fang told the Nikkei Shimbun that the DPRK has nothing to do with the suspected abduction of a Japanese girl, and that abduction is not an accepted revolutionary method. He refused to make further comment about the incident, which was recently reported by the ROK government to the Japanese government. Regarding to Kim Jong-il's possible succession to power in July this year after three years of mourning for the late Kim Il-sung, Fang told both Nikkei and Yomiuri interviewers that Kim Jong-il is already publicly accepted as the late Kim's successor but that the official succession will take place. Nikkei Shimbun suggested that this "official" succession may mean that there may be an election. Regarding the food crisis, Fang admitted that the DPRK's situation is critical and expressed gratitude for international support. Lastly, regarding Japan's relations with the DPRK, Fang expressed hope that Japan and the DPRK will normalize diplomatic relations but stated that Japan's reflection on past mistakes should come first. He also stated that, despite the postponement of the four-party peace talks briefing, he would appreciate it if the major powers helped North-South unification to progress peacefully.

3. DPRK Accused of Old Japanese Kidnapping

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("DPRK AGENTS SUSPECTED IN 1977 ABDUCTION OF JAPANESE GIRL," 15, 2/3/97) reported that the Japanese government received a report from the ROK government stating that a Japanese middle school girl who went missing in 1978 in Niigata Prefecture, Japan, may have been abducted by the DPRK. A Japanese security official stated that it has not been confirmed whether the missing girl was the one mentioned in the report but that the government is looking into the matter. According to the Yomiuri article, thirteen-year old Megumi Yokota disappeared on her way home from school in 1978. The article also pointed out that 1978 was the year in which a series of mysterious missing cases occurred and suggested that this case was the first in the series. The article added that Kim Hyun-hui, a former DPRK agent convicted for the 1987 bombing of a Korean Airlines jumbo jet, told Yomiuri Shimbun that she learned Japanese from a Japanese woman abducted by the DPRK.

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("CHIEF CABINET SECRETARY PLEDGES TO COLLECT INFORMATION ON DPRK'S SUSPECTED ABDUCTION," 15, 2/3/97) reported that Seiroku Kajiyama, Chief Cabinet Secretary of the Hashimoto Cabinet, told reporters on February 3 that he intends to collect information about the possible abduction case.

4. Japan-PRC Relations

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("JAPAN TO RESUME UNTIED AID TO PRC," 3, 2/7/97) reported that the Japanese government finally decided to resume untied fund aid to the PRC next month. Such aid (aside from humanitarian funds) has been frozen since the PRC's nuclear test in August 1995. Japanese Foreign Minister Yukihiko Ikeda will officially sign the resumption agreement upon the ruling parties' approval during his visit to the PRC next month. The aid will total approximately 1.8 billion yen and is expected to assist construction of medical facilities for women in Nanjin. However, the report added that Japan's untied yen loan remains suspended.

5. Japan's Sea Lane Defense Policy

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("CABINET SECURITY OFFICE ALSO CONSIDERS SEA LANE POLICY," 2, 2/5/97) reported that a Japanese Cabinet security official revealed at the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) headquarters on February 4 that an emergency measure study, which started last May, will include a review of sea lane security. The study will focus on protection of Japanese overseas, contingencies for a mass of refugees, patrol of important off-shore facilities, and assistance to the US military. The report also said that sea lane policy is being discussed in relation to assistance to the US military and that the main focus will be on emergencies in the regions around Japan. The report added that the official also revealed that the office will conclude the study on assistance to the US military as part of the review of Japan-US Defense Guidelines by autumn 1997. With regard to protection of Japanese overseas, the study will discuss whether to allow dispatching of self-defense force vessels.

6. Japan-ASEAN Defense Relations

The Daily Yomiuri ("3 ASEAN COUNTRIES AGREE TO HOLD REGULAR SECURITY TALKS WITH JAPAN," 1, 2/4/97) carried a Kyodo News report stating that Naoki Murata, Deputy Director General of the Defense Agency, revealed on February 3 that Japan has reached basic agreement with Indonesia, Singapore, and Thailand to hold regular bilateral talks on regional security among defense officials. According to the report, the proposal was first made by Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto on January 14 during his tour of ASEAN countries. According to the report, he also called for "frank dialogues on regional security with ASEAN on a bilateral basis."

7. Japan-Russia-PRC-ROK Talks on Future Oil Spills

The Asahi Shimbun ("JAPAN, RUSSIA, PRC AND ROK TO DISCUSS OIL POLLUTION IN SEA OF JAPAN: AIM TO REACH COOPERATION AGREEMENT," 1, 2/2/97) reported that the recent oil spill by a Russian tanker in Toyama, Japan prompted Japan, Russia, the ROK, and the PRC to hold talks in the prefecture in July this year on measures to be taken in the event of similar accidents off their coasts. The Japanese Transportation Ministry and the Maritime Safety Agency want to reach agreement on mutually dispatching oil-cleaning vessels and personnel to efficiently clean up oil spills from the sea. The report added that the talks are part of the United Nations project on environment protection in the Northern Pacific.

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