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In today's Report:

I. United States

1. ROK Strikes
2. US View of ROK Strikes
3. Japan Oil Spill Threatens Nuclear Reactor
4. DPRK Reparations Demand to Japan

II. Republic of Korea

1. Four Party Peace Talks Proposal Briefing
2. KEDO-DPRK Signs Protocols
3. DPRK to Resume Canning of Fuel Rods
4. Tumen River Area to be Opened for Tourism
5. DPRK Water Pollution
6. ROK-Canada Relations

I. United States

1. ROK Strikes

Reuters ("KOREA COURT ISSUES WARRANTS FOR STRIKE LEADER," Seoul, 01/10/97) reported that a ROK court on Friday issued arrest warrants for seven strike leaders, ignoring unions' threats of all-out strikes and rebuffing international appeals. Korean Confederation of Trade Unions president Kwon Young-kil and six deputies were reported to have taken refuge in the Myongdong Cathedral in Seoul, sheltering inside a ramshackle tent and enduring freezing conditions. They have warned that any attempt to seize them will trigger nationwide work stoppages, including a public sector shutdown. "If any of the seven, including myself, are arrested, we have orders to start intensive strikes immediately," Kwon told a news conference before the warrants were issued. Myongdong church official Chang Bok-pil urged government and union leaders to compromise, saying "democracy is the result of talks and cooperation." However, he admitted that there was nothing the clergy could do if police decided to violate sacred ground and arrest the seven in their tent pitched beneath a statue of the Virgin Mary.

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I. United States

1. ROK Strikes

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The Associated Press ("S. KOREA WORKERS, POLICE CLASH," Seoul, 01/10/97) later reported that striking workers formed a human barricade early Saturday outside the Myongdong Cathedral in Seoul, blocking police from pushing through to arrest the seven labor leaders who have taken sanctuary inside. Some twenty police officers early Saturday tried to push their way through one hundred strikers blocking the entrance to Myongdong Cathedral, but gave up after scuffling with strikers armed with metal pipes. Inside the cathedral, priests and opposition lawmakers kept vigil with the seven union leaders. Thirteen other leaders, representing auto, metal and hospital unions, have barricaded themselves inside their work sites. Opposition politicians have demanded that police refrain from calling in riot police to break up the rallies and arrest the leaders. The nation's Catholic, Protestant, and Buddhist leaders have all called for a peaceful solution to the confrontations. But police said a raid on the Seoul cathedral is a matter of time. Hopes for a peaceful end to the largest organized strike ever in the ROK, now in its seventeenth day, are increasingly waning, with unions, companies, and police all sticking to hard-line positions on the unpopular new labor law at the center of the dispute. The national news agency Yonhap reported that twenty workers and police were injured in clashes Friday, adding that the violence left the industrial city of Ulsan, 190 miles southeast of Seoul, looking "like a battlefield."

2. US View of ROK Strikes

US State Department Spokesman Nicholas Burns ("STATE DEPT. NOON BRIEFING, JANUARY 9," USIA Transcript, 01/10/97), in response to reporters' questions, said the new ROK labor law, the widespread strikes it has spurred, and the resulting violence on the streets of ROK cities is a "dispute which is clearly domestic to, internal to the Republic of Korea." "Frankly, I think this is one of those cases where I'm not sure it's appropriate at this point for the United States to inject itself," he said. Asked whether the actions of the police raise human rights questions which would be a legitimate US interest, Burns said, "I don't believe we're in a position to make that judgment yet. We do have, of course, the annual human rights reports. I know that the report on the Republic of Korea will include this year, as it has in past years, a section on worker's rights. That is one of the issues, as you know, that is at play here. I think we'll have to wait until the release of that report for a statement."

3. Japan Oil Spill Threatens Nuclear Reactor

The Associated Press (Katsumi Kasahara, "OIL SPILL NEARS JAPAN NUKES," Mikuni, Japan, 01/10/97) reported that the oil spill that has been spoiling miles of scenic Japanese shoreline on

Friday began drifting toward seaside nuclear power plants, threatening to clog vital cooling systems. Eight coast guard ships and some forty fishing vessels rushed to set up an oil fence to hold back a 7-mile-long part of the spill near the entrance to Wakasa Bay, to keep the floating gobs of oil from the power plants ringing the bay. The 962,000-gallon spill, one of the worst in Japanese history, has already ruined swaths of rocky coastline, taking a toll on the area's fishing and tourist industries. At least a dozen oil slicks have spread to five states along a 125-mile stretch of Japan's western coast since an offshore Russian tanker sank and split in two on January 2 about 90 miles off the coast.

4. DPRK Reparations Demand to Japan

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("N. KOREA DEMANDS TALKS WITH JAPAN TO SETTLE WAR REPARATIONS," Seoul, 01/10/97) reported that on Friday the DPRK urged Japan to begin talks to atone for its World War II atrocities against Koreans and to improve ties with Pyongyang.

"Liquidation of the abnormal past and improvement of ties between the DPRK and Japan are what the peoples of the two countries wish and, at the same time, what the DPRK government has consistently called for," the DPRK's official Korean Central News Agency quoted a Foreign Ministry spokesman as saying. The spokesman, who was not named, said Japan's refusal to apologize makes it clear that Tokyo does not deserve to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Tokyo and Pyongyang currently have no official ties. Preliminary talks to discuss establishing ties have stalled over differences over Japan's wartime reparations and urgings to Tokyo by Seoul not to move forward until the DPRK agrees to discussions with the ROK.

II. Republic of Korea

1. Four Party Peace Talks Proposal Briefing

US and DPRK officials will meet next Thursday to finalize the timing, site and level of the briefing to be offered to the DPRK jointly by Seoul and Washington on the proposed four-party peace talks, a diplomatic source revealed Thursday. Minister-Counselor Han Song-ryol at the DPRK mission in New York will represent Pyongyang, and his US counterpart will be Mark Minton, head of the US State Department's Korea desk, the source said. The ROK Foreign Ministry expected that the venue for the briefing will likely be New York, or a city in a third country which has a DPRK embassy, such as Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Geneva, or Beijing. ROK Foreign Ministry officials said they expect the joint briefing to be held at the end of this month and that Deputy Foreign Minister Song Young-shik and US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Charles Kartman would lead the Seoul and Washington delegations to the briefing session. The DPRK's Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye-gwan is expected to lead his government's delegation to the three-way talks. Seoul officials said the three-way meeting will not be confined only to providing an explanation on the four-party talks. "During the briefing session, we will also raise the issues of the timing, venue and the level of the four-party meeting," another ROK Foreign Ministry official said. "In that sense, the briefing session will virtually function as preparatory talks for the four-party meeting." The official, however, did not rule out having another preparatory meeting attended by the PRC before the four-way talks are actually held, should the first briefing fail to finalize the format of the proposed meeting. Following the joint briefing session, the DPRK and US delegations will have a separate meeting to discuss bilateral issues of concern, he added, something Seoul agreed to in the process of the negotiations between officials of the DPRK and the US that led to the DPRK's apology for the submarine incident. Issues likely to be addressed include US concern over the possibility of the DPRK exporting its mid- and long-range missile technology to Syria, Iran and other Middle Eastern states, exchange of liaison offices between Pyongyang and Washington, repatriation of the remains of US soldiers missing from the Korean War, and lifting of US economic sanctions against the DPRK. (The Korea Times, "US, NK TO MEET IN NEW YORK TO DISCUSS 4-PARTY TALKS," Seoul, 01/10/97)

2. KEDO-DPRK Signs Protocols

In New York, the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) and the DPRK

signed two protocols for the DPRK light-water nuclear reactor project. The protocols, signed by KEDO executive director Stephen Bosworth and DPRK ambassador-at-large Ho Jong, cover the takeover of the construction site at Shinpo and services provided by the DPRK, including compensation to construction workers. The two sides last July signed three protocols on consular protection, travel and communications. As all the protocols went into effect immediately, the basic legal measures to allow the start of the construction work were completed, officials said. Now, the seventh site survey team is planned to be sent to Shinpo early next month, while a freighter carrying fifteen tons of drilling equipment to Shinpo is set to leave the ROK port of Pusan around January 20. The formal start of the construction work at Shinpo is expected to occur in March or April. (KPS, "PROTOCOLS ON LIGHT-WATER REACTOR PROJECT GO INTO EFFECT," Seoul, 01/10/97)

3. DPRK to Resume Canning of Fuel Rods

The DPRK will resume canning spent fuel rods at the nuclear plant in Yongbyon next week, ROK government officials said yesterday. Some ten US engineers, accompanied by Joel Wit from the US State Department Korea Desk, are already in Pyongyang in preparation for the work, said an official at the Office of the Light-Water Nuclear Project under the ROK Ministry of National Unification. The US delegation returned to Pyongyang Wednesday after a two-month suspension announced abruptly by the DPRK early last November. The ROK official said that their DPRK counterparts also returned to work yesterday. The DPRK, in the wake of the submarine incursion incident, stopped the canning work to which it is committed under its 1994 Geneva accord with the US. The accord binds the DPRK to can eight thousand spent fuel rods from its graphite reactor plant, situated 100km north of Pyongyang, as a condition for receiving two light-water nuclear reactors and interim fuel oil supplies. Some four thousand spent fuel rods remain to be canned. Canning work, to begin again next week, will be supervised by International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) officials posted in Pyongyang. (The Korea Herald, "CANNING OF FUEL RODS AT YONGBYON TO RESUME NEXT WEEK, OFFICIALS SAY; US ENGINEERS BACK TO WORK IN DPRK AFTER ABRUPT VACATION," Seoul, 01/10/97)

4. Tumen River Area to be Opened for Tourism

The DPRK is considering allowing tourists from the PRC into areas near the Tumen River where the Najin-Sunbong Free Trade Area is located, and PRC tourism offices in the border areas are preparing tours ranging from one to three days, the PRC's Yianbien Daily reported Monday. The one-day tour covers On-song and Sae-pyul in the most northern portion of the DPRK, the two-day tour includes Rajin and Sonbong, and the three-day tour combines the other two itineraries. The PRC newspaper did not mention if ROK citizens will be allowed to join the tours. (Chosun Ilbo, "NORTH TO OPEN TOURISM IN TUMEN RIVER AREA," Seoul, 01/10/97)

5. DPRK Water Pollution

Fish in the rivers near major cities of the DPRK, such as Pyongyang and Wonsan, are dying in large numbers due to water pollution. Half of the human waste produced by the 3.3 million citizens of Pyongyang is not treated before being released into the Taedong River. No more fish or clams can be found in the sea off Wonsan. These conditions are revealed in a soon to be published report by Doctor Jung Hee-song of the Environmental Technology Development Institute. According to the report, the Bohtong River, a tributary of the Taedong River which flows into the center of

Pyongyang, is so polluted that it is difficult to see even 20 or 30 cm deep into the river. It is difficult for the fish to live in the summer. The Tumen River is also heavily polluted. Ten to fifteen million tons of stone powder from the Munsan iron mine are dumped into the river, leaving only 106 km of the total 505 km course of the Tumen River still usable. There are 37 kinds of fish known to live in the river, but they now only exist 100 km upstream. (Chosun Ilbo, "SERIOUS POLLUTION REPORTED IN THE DPRK," Seoul, 01/10/97)

6. ROK-Canada Relations

Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien is due to arrive in Seoul today for a six-day official visit to the ROK at the invitation of President Kim Young Sam. He is scheduled to hold a summit meeting with President Kim tomorrow to discuss ways of promoting substantive cooperation between the two countries in the areas of trade, economy and science-technology. He is being accompanied on his visit to the ROK by the prime ministers of ten Canadian provinces as well as some 350 Canadian businessmen. (KPS, "CANADIAN PREMIER TO ARRIVE IN SEOUL TODAY WITH 300 BUSINESSMEN," Seoul, 01/10/97)

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<http://interactive5.wsj.com/edition/current/summaries/asia.htm>

<http://www.latimes.com/HOME/NEWS/>

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