

# NAPSNet Daily Report 10 March, 1997

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## **I. United States**

### **1. US-DPRK Relations**

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US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in an interview March 6 on the Jim Lehrer Public Broadcast Service (PBS) television "Newshour" program ("ALBRIGHT 3/6 LEHRER "NEWSHOUR" INTERVIEW," USIA Transcript, 2/10/97) described the outcome of the landmark March 5 meeting of US, DPRK, and ROK delegations in New York as "an important beginning. We have wanted for some time to get the Koreans talking to each other. There is a dialogue that is necessary here in order to move for the reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula." Albright said that the ideal next step would be for the four-party peace talks themselves to commence. Commenting on the current situation, Albright recalled her recent trip to the ROK, which included a visit to the Demilitarized Zone. "I think when you go to the DMZ and you see our forces up there and you see the fact that this is kind of the vestige of the Cold War, you know how important it is to get this resolved," she said. Asked where the Korean situation ranked on her "list of priorities," Albright said "this is a very high up there. ... We care a great deal about the security and stability of the Korean Peninsula and Asia."

## **2. Hwang Defection**

The Associated Press ("N. KOREA DEFECTOR MAY QUIT CHINA," Seoul, 3/10/97) reported that Ryu Kwang-sok, head of the ROK Foreign Ministry's Asia-Pacific Affairs Bureau, said Monday that Hwang

Jang Yop, the DPRK defector who has been isolated in the ROK consulate in Beijing since seeking asylum there February 12, will be allowed to leave the PRC. Ryu added that whether Hwang will be allowed to travel to Seoul directly or by way of another country is still under negotiation. "Nothing is definite yet, but the talks have been reduced to two options: whether to come to South Korea directly, or to come via a third country," Ryu said. "There have been ups and downs, but our positions are getting closer, so we can say that there has been progress," he added.

The Associated Press ("TALKS OVER N. KOREAN INTENSIFY," Seoul, 3/9/97) reported that Ryu Kwang-sok said Sunday that ROK-PRC talks over Hwang's fate would be reaching a "crucial stage" this week. "The coming week will be a crucial stage in our negotiations with China," Ryu said. "China no longer seems to be buying time." But Ryu said it was too early to predict when Hwang would leave Beijing. Earlier Sunday, the ROK national news agency Yonhap, quoting government officials it did not identify, said Hwang will leave Beijing early this week for a third country and proceed to the ROK after a temporary stay.

### **3. DPRK Soldiers Enter DMZ**

The Associated Press ("5 N. KOREANS INFILTRATE S. KOREA," Seoul, 3/10/97) reported that ROK troops on the eastern end of the Demilitarized Zone briefly went on alert Monday after five DPRK soldiers were found in the southern side of the zone. The ROK Defense Ministry said the incident began before dawn, lasted one hour and resulted in no exchange of fire. ROK troops searched the area after the DPRK troops withdrew, but defense ministry officials said the DPRK soldiers' exact activities could not be determined because they were moving slowly in the dark. Jim Coles, the spokesman for the US military command in Seoul, said that a complaint will not be filed unless officials find out what the DPRK soldiers were doing. "It could have been an accidental crossing, or they could have been lost," he said. No US soldiers were involved in the incident.

### **4. ROK Adopts Revised Labor Bill**

Reuters ("S.KOREA PASSES NEW LABOR LAW," Seoul, 3/10/97) reported that the ROK National Assembly passed a new labor bill Monday night to replace the law that sparked almost a month of labor strikes. There were 192 members of parliament who supported the new law, while 10 were opposed. The ruling New Korea Party, bowing to pressure from home and abroad, agreed to important revisions to the original law, which was passed in a secret session December 26 in the absence of opposition representatives. The revised legislation delays for two years implementation of a controversial clause making it easier for companies to lay off workers. Provisions designed to discourage strikes were weakened, and instant recognition was offered to the outlawed Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, which spearheaded opposition to the original law. But the confederation immediately denounced the new legislation and vowed to organize fresh protests. "There's no big difference between the original bill and the new one," a confederation spokesman said. "We will announce tomorrow how we will campaign against the new law." The tough labor laws had drawn fire from human rights groups and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) which the ROK joined last year. OECD chief Donald Johnston said Monday that the December labor law was seen as inadequate by many OECD members, but added that the ROK was more likely to bring its labor into line with international norms as a member of the OECD than it would on the outside.

### **5. US Congressional Opposition to Chemical Weapons Pact**

The Associated Press (Cassandra Burrell, "HELMS VOWS TO KILL CHEMICAL PACT," Washington, 3/8/97) reported that US Senator Jesse Helms, chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Saturday vowed unqualified opposition to the proposed chemical weapons ban treaty unless its

supporters give him the changes he wants in it. Helms, a Republican from North Carolina, told attendees at the Conservative Political Action Conference that as it is written, the treaty will give Americans a false sense of security and could even increase the risk that terrorists' use of nerve gas will be more widespread. "This treaty will do absolutely nothing to reduce the dangers of poison gas," he said. "The Russians are actively working to create a new generation of chemical agents that are not even covered by the treaty." The Federation of American Scientists urged ratification in a letter sent Friday to Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott. "The treaty denies us no option we would otherwise wish to exercise, for the United States has already renounced chemical weapons and is in the process of destroying them," the letter said. Helms said that the treaty would allow rogue nations among its signatories greater access to information in the US, although the countries commonly referred to as rogue states, such as Libya, Syria, Iraq, and the DPRK, have not signed the treaty. "As long as I'm around, there's not going to be a Senate Foreign Relations Committee that rubber-stamps dumb and dangerous arms control treaties while sending blank checks to the United Nations and embracing (Cuban President) Fidel Castro," Helms said. The treaty would ban the manufacture of nerve gas and destroy existing arsenals. More than 160 nations have signed the treaty, including the US under the Bush in 1993. Some 70 countries have completed the ratification process, enabling the treaty to come into force April 29 even without US ratification. President Clinton wants the Senate to ratify before then to ensure the US a leading role in establishing guidelines to implement the treaty.

## **II. Republic of Korea**

### **1. US-DPRK Talks To Continue**

The US and the DPRK are scheduled to continue their negotiations on pending issues, such as the opening of mutual liaison offices, in informal contacts in Washington this week. The Pyongyang delegation, led by DPRK Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye-gwan, is the same one that attended the joint briefing on the four-party peace talks proposal and the US-DPRK semi-high level talks, both held in New York last week. Kim, the highest Pyongyang official ever to visit Washington, is slated to meet informally with US administration and legislative officials. "While in Washington, the Pyongyang delegation will continue discussions with US officials on setting up liaison offices in each other's capitals, food aid to the North, relaxation of US economic sanctions against the North, relaxation of US economic sanctions against the North, the missile issue, repatriation of Korean War MIA and the proposed four-party talks," a diplomatic source said. On Tuesday Kim also will attend a seminar discussion of the situation on the Korean peninsula and US-DPRK relations. The delegation is also expected to examine candidate sites for the DPRK's proposed liaison office here, and negotiate concrete steps for the office's opening. However, significant US-DPRK agreements are not expected to be reached during the DPRK delegation's visit, as the US intends to link progress in its relations with Pyongyang, including the opening of liaison offices and easing of its economic sanctions, to Pyongyang's acceptance of the four-party talks and progress in inter-Korean relations, the diplomatic source added. (Korea Times, "US, NK TO CONTINUE TALKS ON LIASON OFFICES," Washington, 03/10/97)

### **2. Hwang Defection**

DPRK defector Hwang Jang-yop is likely to leave Beijing in the near future to travel to Seoul via a third country, according to Ryu Kwang-sok, director general of the ROK Foreign Ministry's Asia and Pacific Affairs Bureau. In a regular press briefing on the case, Ryu hinted at the new development on Hwang, currently isolated in the ROK consulate in Beijing since seeking asylum there on February 12. However, Ryu also said that to protect Hwang's safety ROK authorities would not reveal under any circumstances the name of the third country. "China and North Korea are negotiating how to deal with Hwang. However, China is unlikely to inform North Korea of the name of a third country,"

Ryu said. Ryu also refused to confirm the press report that Hwang will be brought to Seoul via Singapore. Once Hwang leaves for a third country, he is expected to stay there for a month before traveling to Seoul, sources said. Currently, the PRC and the ROK governments are awaiting responses from a few countries to the request that they temporarily accept Hwang as a political refugee. Meanwhile, Ryu said that DPRK Foreign Minister Kim Young-nam met PRC Vice Foreign Minister Tang Jixuan before leaving Beijing after an eight-hour stopover on his way to Africa. The two officials are believed to have exchanged opinions on Hwang's defection, a development which may be burdensome to the ROK, he said. However, the official said that Seoul and Beijing had managed to narrow their differences during their month-long negotiations, although there were ups and downs during the process. "However, the exact date of Hwang's departure is still uncertain because Seoul and Beijing are seeking to reach a package deal," he said. At the same time, he added, the DPRK's attitude toward the defection case remains an important variable in the ongoing negotiations. (Korea Times, "HWANG TO LEAVE BEIJING SOON FOR THIRD COUNTRY," 03/10/97)

### **3. ROK Discusses Unification Funding**

ROK Vice Prime Minister Kwon O-kie, who also heads the Ministry of Unification, said yesterday, "We plan to begin specific consultations with economic experts over the establishment of a 'unification fund' to prepare for the costs of unification, under the perception that the issue cannot be infinitely postponed." Vice Prime Minister Kwon made the statement in answer to a question by Rep. Kim Sang-woo of the main opposition National Congress for New Politics (NCNP) in a session of the Unification and Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly. Kwon also said, "When the time is right, we will also discuss the matter in detail with the National Assembly." The statement by Kwon is worth noting as it is a change from the government's previous position of avoiding clear statements on the financing of unification costs. Kang Ho-yang, in charge of public information at the ROK Ministry of Unification, said, "The South Korean government has not previously stated its position on the issue of creating an unification fund as it could have incited the North." He also added, "Taking into consideration the desperate plight of North Korea, however, the government decided discussions over the financing of unification costs can no longer be postponed." (Joong Ang Ilbo, "SEOUL TO DISCUSS ESTABLISHMENT OF UNIFICATION FUND," 03/08/97)

### **4. ROK Considers Buying Russia's Missiles**

The ROK is willing to consider purchasing Russian-made S300 anti-aircraft and other missiles if Russia offers them to offset debts it owes to the ROK. "We will welcome it if Russia makes such an offer," a senior procurement officer at the ministry said. "It is our policy to look at every possible alternative on the table with capabilities, prices and political considerations topping the list of our considerations." The comment contrasted with the ROK's heavy reliance on the US for its overseas military procurement, and comes at a time when the ROK has earmarked hundreds of billions of won for a key missile procurement project. Procurement officers reportedly are now comparing strengths and weaknesses of the Russian missiles and US-made Patriot missiles before choosing between the two. The current general view is that the US-made missiles are expensive, but the Russian model is not compatible with existing ROK air defense systems. Procurement experts say that competition has already heated up between US and Russia to get the Korean deal. "The two countries will use all they have to steer the deal to their side not only because the deal is very lucrative but also because it is like a test of which weapon is better," one said. Perhaps in connection, retired US general Gary Luck, who commanded the US Forces Korea, visited the ROK in the capacity of an advisor to Raytheon, maker of the Patriots, a ministry official said on condition of anonymity. The ROK provided economic aid of US\$1.47 billion to the now-defunct Soviet Union, and the debt taken over by its successor Russia has now ballooned to US\$1.89 billion dollars in principle and interest. (Korea Times, "KOREA WILLING TO CONSIDER BUYING RUSSIA'S 300 ANTI-AIRCRAFT MISSILES FOR

US\$ 1.4 BILLION DEBT," 03/10/97)

## 5. DPRK May Have Penetrated ROK Army

In a session of the ROK National Assembly's National Defense Committee, Unification Minister Kim Dong-jin said, "Based on North Korea's espionage tactics towards the South, it is possible that North Korean agents have penetrated the South Korean Army." Minister Kim also stated, "Accordingly, we are coming up with active counter-measures by maximizing the capabilities of the military's counter-espionage agency." (Joong Ang Ilbo, "NORTH KOREAN AGENTS COULD HAVE PENETRATED THE SOUTH KOREAN ARMY," 03/08/97)

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.

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