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I. United States

1. Four-Party Peace Talks

The Associated Press (Alexander G. Higgins, "KOREAS TO HOLD PEACE TALKS IN MARCH," Geneva, 12/10/97) reported that an anonymous US official said that the DPRK demand for US troop reductions on the Korean peninsula was "way ahead of the process" and that there would be no talk about troop reductions in the four-party peace talks. He added that the US delegation was disappointed that the DPRK omitted the military from its team at the talks. An editorial Wednesday by the DPRK's official Korean Central News Agency said, "So long as the U.S. troops remain in South Korea, peace can never be ensured on the Korean peninsula." [Ed. note: The complete transcript of the statement by Stanley Roth, head of the US delegation to the four-party talks, is being issued by NAPSNet on December 11 as a Special Report.]

2. ROK Presidential Election

The Associated Press (Sang-Hun Choe, "SOUTH KOREA STARTS ABSENTEE VOTING," Seoul, 12/11/97) reported that absentee voting for next week's ROK presidential election began Thursday. The election commission said that 800,000 people, mostly conscripted soldiers, are eligible for the absentee voting, which will continue through Saturday. While it is illegal to reveal the results of public opinion polls during the official 22-day campaign that began on November 26, analysts said that former Kyonggi-do governor Rhee In-je has significantly narrowed his gap with the two front-runners, ruling party candidate Lee Hoi-chang and veteran opposition leader Kim Dae-jung. ROK officials said Thursday that the ROK has been unable to overcome the DPRK's objection to absentee balloting by ROK nuclear technicians working in the DPRK.

3. ROK Financial Crisis

The Associated Press ("RUBIN TO S. KOREA: START IMF REFORMS," Washington, 12/11/97) reported that US Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin called on the ROK Thursday to implement the reforms it agreed upon last week in exchange for a US$57 billion international bailout. Rubin stated, "They have taken a number of very important measures and they have a lot to do and that's the process that's under way." Asked if he was worried about the possibility of the ROK defaulting, Rubin said, "They've got a strong program with the IMF, and I think that the key is for them to implement that program and implement it effectively. That's the process we're all discussing with Korea right now."

Reuters ("S. KOREA'S KIM APOLOGIZES AGAIN, MARKETS UNIMPRESSED," Seoul, 12/10/97) reported that ROK President Kim Young-sam in a televised speech on Thursday took the blame for the country's economic crisis. He also urged ROK citizens to overcome the current situation by tackling the fundamental causes of the economic crisis. He added, "The government will cut its organizations and manpower and institute drastic budget conservation measures."

4. US-PRC Defense Talks

The US Defense Department ("FIRST U.S.-CHINA DEFENSE CONSULTATIVE TALKS DEC. 11-12," Washington, USIA Text, 12/10/97) announced that the first-ever defense consultative talks between the US and the PRC will be held December 11 and 12 at the Pentagon. The announcement said: "Under Secretary of Defense (Policy) Walter B. Slocombe will meet with People's Liberation Army (PLA) Deputy Chief of the General Staff Lt. Gen. Xiong Guangkai to build on the successful summit between President Clinton and PRC President Jiang Zemin in the United States in October. The talks were first proposed by former Secretary of Defense William J. Perry to Minister of National Defense Gen. Chi Haotian during the General's visit to the Pentagon in December 1996. During President Jiang's visit in October, formal agreement was reached on holding regular Defense Consultative Talks. These talks will institutionalize senior-level interactions in the security and defense areas to facilitate better understanding and communications between the U.S. and PLA militaries. The delegations will discuss global and regional defense issues, finalize the 1998 U.S.-PRC military-t--military schedule of contacts, and exchange briefings on humanitarian relief operations. Following the talks, Lt. Gen. Xiong will travel to Baltimore, Gettysburg, New York, and Boston."

5. US-PRC Nuclear Cooperation

The New York Times (Tim Weiner, " U.S. SAYS CHINA ISN'T GIVING NUCLEAR AID TO OTHERS," Washington, 12/11/97) reported that White House officials said Wednesday that the Clinton administration will certify next week that the PRC is no longer helping other nations build nuclear weapons. The announcement will open a potential US$60 billion market to the US nuclear-power industry. The Clinton administration's formal certification will come next week in a statement submitted to Congress. The certification is based on assurances from the PRC, monitoring by

international agencies, intelligence reports, and other information. Gary Samore, the National Security Council's senior director for nonproliferation and export controls, said that the certification is "very much in the national interest, because it serves our nonproliferation goals."

6. Taiwan Elections

The Associated Press (David Briscoe, "TAIWAN PARTIES REASSURE U.S.," Washington, 12/10/97) reported that Hsu Hsin-liang, chairman of Taiwan's main opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), said Wednesday that there will be no change in dealings with the US or the PRC despite his party's victories in recent local elections. He stated, "I can assure that the DPP would certainly not be as immature as to be trigger-happy on this matter." Hsu said the DPP would take a "pragmatic approach" to the PRC and would be "cautious" about calling for a plebiscite on independence. He also opposed the idea of talks now with the PRC, saying there is no consensus within Taiwan on how to negotiate and no indication from the PRC of a willingness to compromise. "Under such conditions and without mutual trust, political dialogue would only exacerbate the tension," he said, adding that ongoing economic openings could make a dialogue possible in the future. Government spokesman David Lee also assured the US that first-ever defeat of the ruling Kuomintang party should not be misread as signaling a change in Taiwan's approach to the PRC. However, he added that the outcome of next year's parliamentary elections could affect policies relating to the PRC, and that the ruling party will continue to challenge the DPP on the issue of independence.

7. Taiwan Admission to the UN

Agence France-Presse ("SENEGAL TO PUSH FOR TAIWAN TO BE ADMITTED TO U.N. AGAIN," Dakar, 12/11/97) reported that Senegalese officials said Thursday that the Senegal parliament has agreed to support Taiwan's request for readmission to the UN as part of a cooperation accord signed by the two countries. Frederick Chien, the speaker of parliament in Taiwan, signed the cooperation pact Wednesday at the end of a four-day visit to Dakar.

II. Republic of Korea

1. Four-Party Talks

The DPRK reiterated in four-party peace talks in Geneva Tuesday that the US should withdraw its troops from the ROK and sign a peace treaty with the DPRK to alleviate tension and ensure peace on the Korean peninsula. DPRK Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye-gwan made the remarks in a keynote speech to the peace talks. Kim's demands, which are not acceptable to the ROK and the US, are expected to hamper the smooth progress of the peace talks. Kim, who also headed the DPRK delegation at the preliminary rounds, said that the US should first improve relations with the DPRK and lift US-imposed economic sanctions. PRC Vice Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan called for an end to inter-Korean confrontations by introducing such steps as mutual respect and non-interference in each others' domestic affairs. He said that it is impossible to establish a peace system on the Korean peninsula through the "Cold War-style way of thinking" in a fast-changing world. Tang stressed that escalating tension on the peninsula would erode the interests of all Koreans, and he stressed the necessity of building a peace system to replace the armistice system. (Korea Times, "NK CALLS FOR US TROOP PULLOUT," 12/11/97)

2. DPRK Famine

Karen Gottlieb, executive director of Americares Free Clinics, who arrived in Beijing on Tuesday from Pyongyang, said Tuesday that the mortality rate for children under five in the DPRK rose from 31 per 1,000 in 1994 to 58 per 1,000 in 1996. The figures, from the DPRK's Health Ministry, were

the first published statistics from the DPRK on the effect of three years of massive food shortages, and indicate a death rate of one in 20 infants. (Korea Times, "INFANT MORTALITY RATE DOUBLES IN NORTH KOREA," 12/11/97)

3. ROK Financial Crisis

The ROK Government is reviewing the possibility of sending roving ambassadors to the US and Japan in hopes of resolving the currency crisis by boosting diplomacy. Despite the IMF bail-out loan, US and Japanese institutions have not recovered their credit line since last October. Experts say that in order to overcome the currency crisis, more efforts should be placed on high ranking diplomacy between the US and Japan. They warned that as long as the US does not express any interest in lending the ROK money, US financial institutions and the Japanese Government are unlikely to provide any funds for the ROK. The US reportedly dismissed the idea of early US$5 billion installments which was proposed by the ROK Deputy Minister of Finance and Economy. Japan is also rejecting the ROK's demand that it provide early loans. Experts also say that the current administration has had problems with the Clinton Administration concerning policy toward the DPRK, imports of Russian-made weapons, and the opening of the auto market. Possible candidates for the roving ambassadorship include POSCO Chairman Kim Man-je, or Kim Kyong-won, former Ambassador to the US. (Chosun Ilbo, "GOVERNMENT STUDIES SENDING ENVOYS TO US, JAPAN," 12/11/97)

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