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I. United States

1. US-DPRK Meetings

US State Department Spokesman Nicholas Burns ("STATE DEPT. NOON BRIEFING, MARCH 10," USIA Transcript) commented on DPRK Vice Minister Kim Gye-gwan's visit to Washington this week at the invitation of the Atlantic Council. Burns said that Kim would be meeting with "some other individuals and organizations privately this week," but would "not be having official appointments while he's here." "We spent a lot of time with him last week, as you know, on Wednesday in the trilateral meeting and on Friday, in the bilateral meeting with the United States. ... He had many, many hours of discussions with Chuck Kartman last week. In fact, on Friday, they spent the entire day together," Burns said. Burns added, "This has happened before. Last year, a Vice Foreign

Minister of North Korea, Kim Jong-u, visited Washington. At that time, he did have official meetings at the State Department. But since we've just concluded those meetings in New York, we felt no need to have them here at the Department." Burns also said that Kim and his delegation would "certainly" be "free to scout out real estate in the Washington area" for their future liaison office, although adding, "Further work needs to be done in our relationship and on that issue before we can take the step." Lastly, Burns said the US received a "very strong impression from the meetings in New York" that Kim must brief his superiors on the results of last week's talks before a de

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2. Hwang Defection

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("S. KOREA TALKS OVER N. KOREAN DEFECTOR MAY BE NEAR END," Seoul, 3/11/97) reported that Ryu Kwang-sok, head of the ROK Foreign Ministry's Asia-Pacific Affairs Bureau, said Tuesday that negotiations with the PRC over the defection of DPRK ideologue Hwang Jang-yop may be concluded as early as this week. "There is a big chance that talks on Hwang's defection will be concluded within the week, or by early next week," Ryu told reporters. Ryu added that no decision has been made yet on whether Hwang will go to Seoul directly or via a third country. There have been widespread reports that the PRC favors the latter. Hwang and an aide sought asylum at the ROK consulate in Beijing on February 12.

3. US Vice President to Promote Four-Party Talks in Asia

AP-Dow Jones News Service ("GORE TO GO TO ASIA TO DISCUSS KOREAN FOUR-PARTY TALKS," Washington, 3/11/97) reported that US Vice President Al Gore's upcoming trip to the PRC, Japan and elsewhere in Asia late in March is an effort to build momentum for the four-party talks on Korean peace, according to a White House spokesman. US officials have recently said they don't expect the DPRK to be prepared to enter into the formal talks until this summer. The joint US/ROK proposal would have the US and the PRC mediating direct negotiations between the DPRK and the ROK.

4. US POWs in DPRK

The Associated Press (Robert Burns, "CLUES TO U.S. POWS MAY SURFACE," Washington, 3/11/97) reported that commencement of Korean peace talks could help reveal the fates of hundreds of US military personnel who did not return from the Korean War. While many are believed to have been lost on battlefields or to have died in prisoner-of-war camps, reports at the time said some were last seen alive in captivity but did not return. In recent months Pentagon investigators have received unsubstantiated tips that some captives may still be in the DPRK. Some also believe there are four US Army soldiers in the DPRK who deserted their units in the 1960s, one of whom may want to return to the US. The DPRK has denied there are any US citizens there. US officials raised the matter during meetings with DPRK officials in New York last week. "The North Koreans were positive in their response," a Pentagon official familiar with the exchange said Monday, speaking on condition of anonymity. In last week's talks, US officials also asked that the DPRK open its archives to aid not only in future searches for remains but also in resolving cases of US servicemen who

might have been left behind alive, the official said. Initially the US reported 944 missing servicemen believed to have been in communist control. That number has been reduced to 389, where it has stayed for more than three decades. How many of those were alive at the war's end is unclear.

5. View on DPRK Regime Prospects

The Washington Post carried an analysis by Kevin Sullivan ("DON'T BET THE COLLECTIVE ON NORTH KOREA'S IMMINENT COLLAPSE," Seoul, 3/9/97, C01) in which he argued that, although many see the DPRK's attendance of the four-party peace talks briefing as a sign of the country's desperation, those with the best knowledge of the DPRK believe that the world's last Stalinist regime probably won't collapse anytime soon. Sullivan asserted that because the DPRK is such an isolated, authoritarian regime, the people unquestioningly believe what they are told and accept hardship because of their devotion to their leaders and the consequences of complaining. Despite the fact that intelligence and personal accounts indicate rampant malnutrition, starvation, and the absence of industry, experts on Korean affairs feel that the DPRK's past resilience and the familiarity of its citizens with poverty and hunger will allow the DPRK government to endure. Sullivan said that the most significant threat to the DPRK government would come from within Kim Jong-il's own military leadership. However, Kim's recent replacement of many officers with loyalists seems to have consolidated his power. While the openness that could be created by Kim's request for international assistance might weaken his authority, foreign investment, international aid, and agricultural reform could help sustain the DPRK indefinitely.

6. Japanese Nuclear Ship Irks Australia

The Associated Press ("AUSTRALIA: NUKE SHIP STRAYED," Canberra, Australia, 3/11/97) reported that Australian Foreign Affairs officials confirmed Tuesday that a ship carrying nuclear waste from France to Japan strayed into Australian waters despite assurances from its operators that it would not. A Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade spokesman said that the British-owned "Pacific Teal" entered Australia's 200-mile economic zone sometime in February, and remained in Australian waters until February 27. The ship's operators, British Nuclear Fuels Plc, the Overseas Reprocessing Committee and Compagnie Generale des Materiels Nucleaires, told reporters January 20 that the shipment posed no risk to Australia because it would not pass within territorial waters. The ship left the French port of Cherbourg on January 13 bound for Mutsu Ogwara, Japan, where it is expected to arrive next Tuesday.

II. Republic of Korea

1. Hwang Defection

DPRK Workers' Party secretary Hwang Jang-yop's departure from Beijing may happen in a "matter of days," with the PRC engaging in final negotiations with the ROK and the DPRK on where Hwang should travel first and how long he should stay there before arriving in Seoul. An anonymous official, citing security reasons, refused to reveal whether a country had been picked as a possible stopover place and how long he will stay there before going to the ROK. However, he confirmed that Hwang is still waiting to depart at the ROK consulate, and added that the PRC appears to believe that Hwang was not kidnapped after reviewing statements by Hwang in his own handwriting. The question of how long Hwang should stay in a third country is important, because some scholars on international law here believe that at least one month is needed by the DPRK to alter the "top secrets" Hwang might reveal to ROK intelligence authorities. At the same time, the ROK government needs to set a precedent in dealing with such political asylum cases by making it routine to bring high DPRK officials to Seoul via a third country, thereby alleviating the PRC's burden as the sole third party involved in inter-Korean issues. (Korea Times, "BREAKTHROUGH ON HWANG'S

DEPARTURE TO BE MADE IN DAYS," 03/11/97)

2. US-DPRK Relations

US and DPRK officials fell short of an agreement regarding an end to economic sanctions and additional food aid during their bilateral talks in New York Friday, which followed a briefing by the US and the ROK to the DPRK on the proposed four-party talks. But the two sides agreed to continue consultations at an assistant ministerial level. Analysts in the ROK indicate that Friday's meeting between US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Charles Kartman and DPRK Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye-gwan has separated Washington-Pyongyang relations from inter-Korean relations. Kim's visit to Washington starting Monday suggests that US-DPRK relations have improved beyond where they were prior to the DPRK's submarine incursion. Although Washington is unlikely to make swift responses in meeting the DPRK demands before Pyongyang attends the four-party talks, some analysts believe that improvement in US-DPRK ties will be in tension with progress in ROK-DPRK relations. A most plausible scenario for the DPRK's future course of action is that it will eventually participate in the four-party talks but drag its feet in working out a peace settlement. Since it is thought that both Washington and Pyongyang want to maintain the status quo it may mean that improvement of US-DPRK ties is a matter of time. (Korea Times, "U.S., NORTH KOREA AGREE TO CONTINUE DEPUTY MINISTER-LEVEL TALKS," Kim Kyung-ho, 03/11/97)

3. DPRK Soldiers Infiltrate DMZ

Five DPRK soldiers, armed only with individual firearms, strayed across the Military Demarcation Line yesterday, but returned one hour later without incident, according to ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) spokesman Yeo Sook-dong. Yeo said that the ROK will protest the intrusion through the Military Armistice Commission as it was an apparent violation of the 1953 armistice agreement. The DPRK soldiers were observed by ROK guards crossing some 400 meters into the southern side of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) at around 5:30 a.m., and crossed back to the DPRK between 6:30 and 6:40 a.m. The Military Demarcation Line runs along the middle of the 4-km-wide DMZ. Yeo added that the Military Demarcation Line in the Chorwon area, some 60 km north of Seoul, was not very well marked. A ROK Defense Ministry source, referring to the DPRK's food shortage, said that the soldiers may have been hunting game animals or collecting something to eat. (Korea Herald, "5 NORTH KOREAN SOLDIERS INFILTRATE INTO DMZ," 03/11/97)

4. US Vice President to Visit ROK

US Vice President Al Gore will arrive in Seoul on March 28 for a two-day visit to meet with top ROK officials to discuss security issues facing the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia, including the DPRK's severe rice shortage, a spokesman for the ROK Prime Minister's Office said yesterday. The US vice president will also exchange views with ROK officials about enhancement of economic and trade ties, including cooperation in environmental and scientific issues to which Gore has paid special attention. Timed with Gore's visit, the two countries will review "volatile" DPRK issues such as leadership changes and grain shortages, and also seek ways to strengthen bilateral ties, the spokesman said. (Korea Times, "GORE TO VISIT KOREA MARCH 28-29," 03/11/97)

III. Announcements

1. CATO Institute Nuclear Weapons Debate

On Thursday, March 13, the Cato Institute will be hosting a policy forum debate between Vice Admiral John Shanahan (CDI) and Dr. Richard Haass (Brookings) on the proposition, "Should Nuclear Weapons be Abolished?" The event starts at noon, with a luncheon to follow. To register,

contact Heather Anttila by phone at 202-789-5229, or by email at hanttila@cato.org.

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.

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