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I. United States

1. DPRK Official Apparently Defects

Reuters ("N. KOREA'S TOP IDEOLOGUE DEFECTS TO S. KOREA," Seoul, 2/12/97) reported that the ROK Foreign Ministry announced Wednesday that Hwang Jang-yop, a close aide to DPRK leader Kim Jong-il, defected and sought asylum at Seoul's embassy in Beijing along with his assistant Kim Dok-hong. "Workers Party secretary Hwang Jang-yop expressed his intention to defect at 10:05 a.m. (local time) at the consular section of the embassy," Ryu Kwang-sok, director-general of the Foreign Ministry's Asia-Pacific Bureau, told reporters. "Our embassy in China has notified Hwang's defection to the Chinese authorities [sic] and we are trying to resolve the matter through diplomatic channels," Ryu said. However, the DPRK Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) quickly denied the report, issuing a foreign ministry statement saying the defection was "inconceivable and impossible" and that the ROK's claim was a ruse to cover the kidnapping of the official. Hwang, 73, played a leading role in shaping the policy of Juche, which provides the ideological underpinning for communism in the DPRK, and is one of eleven secretaries on the powerful secretariat of the ruling Workers Party. He is also a member of the party's central committee and is in charge of its foreign policy, according to Seoul officials who rank him number 24 in the Pyongyang power structure. The report of the defection comes four days before Kim Jong-il's much heralded 55th birthday. The ROK

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I. United States

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Reuters ("N. KOREAN DEFECTION DISPUTED," Tokyo, 2/12/97) earlier reported that O Huyong-jin, Vice Chairman of the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (the de facto DPRK embassy in Japan), said prior to the KCNA announcement that Hwang Jang-yop had not sought asylum in the ROK embassy in Beijing, but was in fact on a train due to arrive in Pyongyang Thursday afternoon. "We confirmed with the North Korean embassy in Beijing, as well as back home (in Pyongyang), that Secretary Hwang left Beijing for Pyongyang," O Huyong-jin said. O Huyong-jin did not identify how Pyongyang had confirmed Hwang's departure, saying only: "We have reliable sources." "This is a serious, international problem. If what we say turns out to be true, as it surely will, it's going to be a major incident," O Huyong-jin said.

The Associated Press (Ju-yeon Kim, "TOP NORTH KOREAN DEFECTS," Seoul, 2/12/97) earlier reported that the ROK ambassador in Beijing, Chung Jong-wook, also said that Hwang Jang-yop and his aide Kim Dok-hong were in the ROK embassy in Beijing and seeking asylum in the ROK. "Since (Hwang's) free will to defect has been confirmed, the issue will be handled through consultations with the Chinese government," the ambassador said. The report also noted that the ROK foreign minister canceled a weekend trip to Singapore and the government called an emergency Cabinet meeting to discuss ways to bring Hwang and his aide to Seoul, underscoring the importance of the apparent defection. One ROK official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the defection could be a sign of a power struggle within the DPRK's hierarchical regime. Hwang also could provide a wealth of information about the DPRK's government, which rules one of the world's most closed societies, the official said.

2. DPRK Food Aid

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("U.N. APPEALS FOR URGENT INTERNATIONAL AID IN NORTH KOREA," Rome, 2/12/97) reported that the Rome-based UN World Food Program on Tuesday officially appealed for US\$41.6 million in emergency food aid for the DPRK. Terming the situation critical, the agency said it seeks to raise a total of 100,000 metric tons of food as well as contributions to cover the cost of transport and monitoring its distribution. The aid is intended to assist 1,730,000 adults and children classified as the most seriously affected by worsening food shortages. However, the agency said the appeal represents only a part of total food requirements, and it urged countries to make food pledges as soon as possible. Namanga Ngongi, the agency's deputy executive director, said in a statement: "Currently people in North Korea are receiving as little as 100 to 150 grams of food a day through the ration system. The situation is critical because if, as feared, food stocks run out in April or May then there is a very real possibility of famine."

US State Department Spokesman Nicholas Burns ("REPORT ON STATE DEPARTMENT NOON

BRIEFING, TUESDAY, FEB. 11," USIA Report, 2/12/97) said that the US is "very seriously studying" the World Food Program appeal for emergency aid to the DPRK, adding that the US was likely to respond within a few days and that its response would be determined "solely on a humanitarian basis." Burns said, "We understand that the World Food Program has limited its appeal to only a fraction of the total food shortfall of North Korea, because it wants to focus on meeting the immediate needs of targeted groups -- and they've targeted young children." Burns noted that the US contributed to the World Food Program US\$8.2 million in 1995 and US\$6.2 million in 1996. "We've responded to all the previous appeals. We do believe there is a food shortage in North Korea. We are very concerned by it. We believe this has led to a humanitarian crisis in North Korea," Burns said.

Reuters ("U.S. SEEN AIDING NORTH KOREA FOOD APPEAL," Washington, 2/12/97) reported the World Food Program announcement and the US government's response, and also reported that a ROK spokesman said that the ROK government would also consider sending food aid in response to the formal appeal. The report noted that experts say the small size of the appeal, compared to the DPRK's need, reflected the difficulty of persuading key donors like the US and the ROK to give anything at all.

3. DPRK Nuclear Plant Construction Talks

AP-Dow Jones News Service ("JAPAN, U.S., SOUTH KOREA DISCUSS NORTH KOREA NUCLEAR AID," Tokyo, 2/12/97) reported that officials from Japan, the ROK and the US on Wednesday began talks on providing new nuclear reactors to the DPRK. The working-level meeting, scheduled to continue Thursday, is aimed at discussing technicalities involving the activities of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), which is overseeing the construction. [Ed. note: For further information please see the related item in the US section of the February 10 Daily Report.]

4. ROK Financial Scandal

AP-Dow Jones News Service ("PRIME MINISTER OFFERS TO RESIGN AS HANBO INVESTIGATION INTENSIFIES," and "S. KOREA RULING PARTY CHAIRMAN IS PREPARED TO RESIGN," Seoul, 2/12/97) reported that ROK Prime Minister Lee Soo-sung indicated Wednesday that he was ready to resign to take responsibility for the Handal bribes-for-loans scandal. "I believe the prime minister must take responsibility. I have no intention to cling to my post," Mr. Lee was quoted by his spokesman, Ahn Kwan-ki, as telling a Cabinet meeting. Ahn said the prime minister held himself morally responsibly for the scandal, although he wasn't directly involved. Lee Hong-koo, chairman of the ruling New Korea Party, also told President Kim Young-sam that he was ready to resign, party officials said Wednesday. Lee had been seeking his party's nomination to run for president in an election scheduled for December. Also Wednesday, Home Minister Kim Woo-suk offered to resign before he appeared for questioning about alleged involvement in the scandal. President Kim has yet to accept the resignations.

II. People's Republic of China

1. US-DPRK Relations

Jie Fang Daily ("US CRITICIZED FOR ITS OVERSEAS TROOPS," Pyongyang, A3, 2/10/97) published a commentary from the DPRK's Rodong Shinmun on February 9. The commentary stated that US conservatives' lengthy discussion on the possibility of a simultaneous outbreak of two wars and the so-called "China threat" was to disguise their desire to station troops outside the US and to create an excuse for the implementation of a hegemonic strategy.

2. PRC-DPRK Relations

China Daily ("FRIENDSHIP LAUDED," Pyongyang, A2, 2/12/97) reported that DPRK Vice-President Li Jong-ok stressed on February 10 that the friendship between the DPRK and the PRC is in keeping with mutual interests and the peace and stability of all Asia. Li made the remark as he awarded the outgoing PRC ambassador, Qiao Zonghuai, with the Order of Friendship. He stated that the Worker's Party and the DPRK Government would push for strengthening their traditional mutual friendship.

3. DPRK-Japan Relations

According to Jie Fang Daily ("DPRK ACCUSES JAPAN FOR ITS STOCKPILING OF NUCLEAR FUEL," Pyongyang, A3, 2/11/97), the DPRK's Rodong Shinmun commented on Japan's secret imports of French nuclear fuel on February 10. The commentary stated that the true intention of Japan's stockpiling of nuclear material in large quantities was to accelerate its nuclear militarization and attain nuclear power status. The commentary stated that Japan plans to stock 400 tons of plutonium.

4. ROK Financial Scandal

China Daily ("PRESIDENT'S ASSOCIATE ARRESTED OVER HANBO," Seoul, A1, 2/13/97) reported that on February 12, ROK prosecutors arrested a close associate of President Kim Young-sam and a top ruling party official in connection with huge loans to the failed Hanbo Steel Co. According to the report, Hong In-gil, a senior official at the presidential Blue House before he was elected to parliament last year, and Chung Jae-chull, the highest ranking New Korea Party official after President Kim, were charged with accepting kickbacks from Hanbo founder Chung Tae-soo. They are the first politicians to be arrested over the loan scandal.

5. US Human Rights Report

The US State Department's 1996 Human Rights Report contains malicious attacks on and lies about the PRC's human rights situation and is an act of hegemony that severely interferes in the internal affairs of the PRC, argued scholars attending a symposium organized by the China Society for the Study of Human Rights, People's Daily ("US HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT FULL OF LIES," Beijing, A4, 2/6/97) reported. Zhou Jue, deputy director of the Society, said that the US State Department's concern over the PRC's human rights situation is artificial. Under the guise of human rights, its real intention is to vilify the PRC's international image, contain the PRC's development and change the country's political system. Liu Wenzong, a professor at the Research Institute of International Laws of the Foreign Affairs College, said that the fundamental error in the report is that the US judges human rights in other countries according to its own values. The PRC, as an independent country with a long history and traditional culture, does not need preaching from other countries, said Liu Nanlai, a professor of law from the PRC Academy of Social Sciences. He argued that the US accusations counter the basic norms governing international relations and violate the PRC people's rights to self-determination. Xiong Lei, vice-president of the Capital Woman Journalists' Association, said the report drew information from three kinds of vague sources: Western press reports; PRC dissidents' statements; remarks or Chinese press reports. She added that "the use of these sources is very unprofessional."

On February 6, a DPRK Foreign Ministry spokesman pointed out in all seriousness that the US State Department's recently issued Human Rights Report indicates that the US still abuses the human rights issue to exert political pressure over other countries and interfere in other countries' internal affairs. People's Liberation Army Daily ("DPRK STRONGLY ACCUSES US FOR `HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT'," A4, 2/8/97) reported.

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. We invite you to reply to today's report, and we welcome commentary or papers for distribution to the network.

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