

# NAPSNet Daily Report 12 March, 1997

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## **I. United States**

### **1. US-DPRK Meetings**

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("U.S., NORTH KOREA OFFICIALS MEET IN WASHINGTON," Washington, 3/12/97) reported that US State Department Spokesman Nicholas Burns said US and DPRK officials met Tuesday to discuss technical issues related to the establishment of diplomatic liaison offices in each other's capitals. Participants included Mark Minton, director of the State Department's Korean Affairs office, and Li Gun, deputy director of the American Affairs bureau in the DPRK Foreign Ministry. Burns said progress on establishing diplomatic missions is linked to DPRK attitudes on other issues, including its willingness to enter the proposed four-party talks on Korean peninsula peace. Li was part of the DPRK delegation that took part in two rounds of wide-ranging talks last week in New York. [Ed. note: Burns stated March 10 that top US and DPRK officials would not meet during the DPRK delegation's visit to Washington. See "US-DPRK Meetings"

in the US section of the March 11 Daily Report.]

US State Department Spokesman Nicholas Burns ("STATE DEPT. NOON BRIEFING, MARCH 11," USIA Transcript, 3/12/97) stated that, contrary to some media reports coming out of the ROK, the US and the DPRK have not come to an agreement to open liaison offices. "That (liaison offices) remains an objective in our relationship, but we have not yet reached that point," Burns said. Burns added, "The ultimate agreement to establish the liaison offices

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US State Department Spokesman Nicholas Burns ("STATE DEPT. NOON BRIEFING, MARCH 11," USIA Transcript, 3/12/97) stated that, contrary to some media reports coming out of the ROK, the US and the DPRK have not come to an agreement to open liaison offices. "That (liaison offices) remains an objective in our relationship, but we have not yet reached that point," Burns said. Burns added, "The ultimate agreement to establish the liaison offices is obviously going to be part of a broader picture, and that is how are we doing with the North Koreans on our agenda with them. Are we moving forward on the Four-Party Talks. Are we moving forward on other issues. Are we having a good discussion of all these issues." [sic] However, Burns denied that the US was holding up establishment of liaison offices until the DPRK was more forthcoming on issues such as the four-party peace talks proposal. "We're not holding anybody hostage here," Burns said. Burns confirmed that Mark Minton, director for Korean Affairs, would meet at the State Department with Li Gun, deputy director of the American Affairs bureau in the DPRK Foreign Ministry, to discuss bilateral issues, including technical issues related to the establishment of the Liaison Offices. In response to a question regarding whether the DPRK delegation's visit to Washington was then in fact a "private" visit, as Burns had previously asserted, Burns said, "There's nothing illegal in our Constitution about meeting foreign officials if they're on a private visit. Chuck Kartman had many, many hours of discussion with Mr. Kim Gye-gwan last week, and we see no reason to have further meetings this week. He's welcome in Washington on a private visit, but I think we'll be meeting with his associates, not him, on these particular issues."

## **2. US-DPRK-ROK Relations**

US State Department Spokesman Nicholas Burns ("STATE DEPT. NOON BRIEFING, MARCH 11," USIA Transcript, 3/12/97), commenting further on the current DPRK delegation's visit to Washington, said, "The development of our relationship with North Korea is going to be a function of the development of relations between South Korea and North Korea. ... If there's progress on the one hand, there can be progress on the other, and I think that's very clear to the North Koreans." However, Burns denied that this position gives the ROK a "veto" over US relations with the DPRK. Burns said, "we're trying to work with the North Koreans to bring them along; to maintain the Agreed Framework, which is being maintained; to convince them to join peace talks to end the Korean War, to provide for stability in the peninsula; to make sure that we're responsive to the food problems in North Korea. That's our agenda with them. Our agenda with South Korea is very different. We have a defense commitment to South Korea, and we almost always see eye-to-eye on the really big issues. We sometimes have minor disagreements, but we do with any country." In response to further questions, Burns added, "I don't want to speak specifically to make these linkages that you want me to make, but I can say in general again that the future of our relationship with North Korea -- the U.S. relationship -- will be dependent upon the future of South Korea's relationship with North Korea. ... You wouldn't leave an ally out in the cold."

### **3. US Vice President's Visit to Asia**

US Presidential Press Secretary Mike McCurry ("WHITE HOUSE DAILY BRIEFING, MARCH 11," USIA Transcript, 3/12/97) announced that "Vice President Al Gore will visit Asia this month with stops in Japan between March 23-24; China March 24-28; and Korea March 28-29. The Vice President will meet with the leaders of the three countries to discuss international, regional and bilateral issues of mutual concern. Details of the Vice President's program are still being worked out with each of the three governments." In response to questions regarding whether the vice president would bring with him new initiatives on the four-party peace talks proposal, McCurry said, "He will obviously discuss with the Republic of Korea the recent briefing on four-party talks. We will continue to press for commencement of those talks and follow up on the briefing that was held, which was a good one."

### **4. ROK President Views DPRK Situation**

AP-Dow Jones News Service ("S. KOREA PRESIDENT WARNS INVASION BY NORTH MORE LIKELY," Seoul, 3/12/97) reported that ROK President Kim Young-sam on Wednesday warned that an invasion by the DPRK is becoming more likely, and called for airtight military security. "The possibility is rising that the cornered North Korea will resort to reckless provocation," Kim said in a commencement address to the Korea Naval Academy. Kim said the North is holding onto its dream of making the South communist, and argued that, faced with imminent collapse, the North might try to provoke the South as a last resort. "We do not know when or how North Korean leaders may try to find an escape hatch to avoid the collapse of their regime," he said. Kim made a similar warning Monday while addressing the graduating students of the Korean Military Academy.

### **5. DPRK Famine Situation**

The Associated Press ("N. KOREA FACES FOOD SHORTAGE," Beijing, 3/12/97) reported that Arthur Holcombe of the UN Development Program said Wednesday in Beijing that DPRK officials he met with in February warned they face a "difficult period" between June and September, after food stocks run out and before the next harvest, and fear they won't be able to deliver even the current meager rations of about 7 ounces a day per person -- less than half the amount needed to maintain body weight. "They recognize that under the existing rations, the population is hard-pressed and they are going into a period when hard work is required," Holcombe told a panel on the DPRK organized by the Foreign Correspondents Club of China. Holcombe, who visited Pyongyang and areas of the countryside devastated by flooding, said that malnutrition is widespread, infants are not growing properly, and night-blindness, rickets and scurvy are common, especially among children. Also on Wednesday, Ian Davies, a UN official advising the DPRK government on bringing in foreign investment, said that the DPRK is now asking foreign investors buying land for projects in the remote Rajin-Sonbong Free Trade Zone to pay for it with gasoline, flour and soybeans. The request has been put to five investors and thousands of tons of grain have been delivered or promised, Davies said. That would feed Rajin's 150,000 people for nearly a year at current ration levels. Davies has traveled to DPRK dozens of times, most recently in late February.

### **6. Japanese Nuclear Plant Accident**

Reuters ("CONTAMINATION UP IN JAPAN NUKE ACCIDENT," Tokaimura, Japan, 3/12/97) reported that Japanese authorities said on Wednesday that 35 workers were contaminated with minor radiation from a fire and explosion at the nuclear reprocessing plant operated by the state-run Power Reactor and Nuclear Fuel Development Corporation (PNC) at Tokaimura, 100 miles northeast of Tokyo. The accident on Tuesday night, Japan's worst-ever atomic incident, put Japan's nuclear industry in the eye of a storm, and forced Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto to apologize to the

nation on the government's behalf. Nuclear spokesmen were on the defensive about why the fire was not properly extinguished, leading to an explosion 10 hours later which endangered 62 cleanup workers. In an unlikely alliance, Hashimoto and environmental groups joined in condemning authorities for their slowness in disclosing the extent of the accident. In December 1995, the PNC also came under criticism over the cover-up of a huge coolant leak at Monju, Japan's only fast-breeder reactor. Although the accident at Monju did not leak radiation, the reactor remains closed. Regarding the Tokaimura plant, a PNC spokesman said that, while some radiation escaped, the levels were far below those that would pose health risks to the public. The spokesman said that no workers sustained more than 0.2 percent of the admissible maximum annual intake, and that there were no evacuations of Tokaimura residents. Anti-nuclear groups said the PNC is not to be trusted. "I have grave doubts about the announced levels of radiation," said Jinzaburo Takagi, a physicist and leader of the anti-nuclear group Citizen's Nuclear Information Centre. PNC officials said that the fire broke out on a turntable in a bituminisation facility for low-level nuclear waste near the main reprocessing plant. The facility is used to mix asphalt into irradiated liquid waste, a by-product of the main spent nuclear fuel reprocessing plant, for storage in drums. The Tokaimura plant is Japan's only nuclear reprocessing facility, extracting plutonium from spent nuclear fuel. The plant reprocesses about 12 percent of the spent nuclear fuel from Japan's 50 running commercial nuclear power plants. The rest is reprocessed at French plants.

## **II. Republic of Korea**

### **1. ROK President Views DPRK Situation**

ROK President Kim Young-sam today warned that the possibility is rising that the DPRK will resort to reckless provocation. "The security situation on the Korean Peninsula right now is extremely murky and uncertain. This is because there has been no change whatsoever in North Korea's strategy of communizing the South," Kim said. Kim then issued a warning that the DPRK is further boosting its war preparedness in view of the increasing flow of defectors from the North, including Hwang Jang-yop, the architect of the *juche* (self-reliant) ideology. The commander-in-chief stressed the need for beefing up naval forces' combat readiness, citing the DPRK submarine infiltration into the ROK last September. "We must not let ourselves be off guard," Kim said, adding that a complete and watertight security posture is the best deterrent against war. Kim made the warning in a congratulatory speech at the 51st commencement ceremony of the ROK Naval Academy in Chinhae, Kyongsang-namdo. (Korea Times, "KIM WARNS CONCERNED NORTH MAY RESORT TO RECKLESS PROVOCATION," 03/12/97)

### **2. Korean To Lead UN Peacekeeping Mission**

ROK Army Major General Ahn Chung-joon, having become the first Korean to lead a UN peacekeeping operation (UNPKO), says that he will do all he can to ensure that lasting peace comes to the Line of Control between India and Pakistan, which will be put under his jurisdiction. The ROK has been a perennial component of the "rainbow" coalition of troops from eight countries in the UN mission, established in 1949 to keep the fragile peace along the Line of Control. Currently the ROK has one colonel and eight officers participating as observers. Commenting on his new mission, General Ahn said that he thinks there exists the possibility of terrorist attacks by the DPRK against the UN mission because of its isolation in the middle of the Himalayan mountains and the existence of many communist agents active in the two countries. Ahn is scheduled to take command of the mission headquarters on March 30 after meeting the UN secretary general in New York on March 15. (Korea Times, "MAJ. GEN. AHN BECOMES 1ST KOREAN TO LEAD UN PKO," Oh Young-jin, 03/12/97)

### III. Announcements

#### 1. Asia Society Publication

The Asia Society has requested distribution of the following notice: "The Asia Society is pleased to announce the publication of "China Briefing: The Contradictions Of Change," edited by William A. Joseph of Wellesley College. The volume provides a retrospective analysis of important events in China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong in the mid-1990s and a prospective look at some of the issues that will shape these areas as they each move toward decisive turning points in their distinct yet intertwined histories. It includes chapters on politics, economics, gender, popular culture, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and U.S.-China relations. "China Briefing" includes a chronology of events from January 1994 through December 1996, a glossary of names and terms, a list of suggested readings, and an index. Contributing authors include: Minxin Pei, Penelope B. Prime, Nancy E. Riley, Jianying Zha, Suzanne Pepper, Cal Clark, and Steven I. Levine. For order information, please contact laurens@asiasoc.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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