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I. United States

1. US Policies Toward DPRK and Cuba Compared

US Presidential Press Secretary Mike McCurry ("WHITE HOUSE DAILY BRIEFING, MARCH 12," USIA Transcript, 3/13/97) responded to a question regarding whether there is an inconsistency between the US policy of engagement with the DPRK and its harder-line approach to Cuba. McCurry replied, "as I often say here, you're comparing apples and oranges." McCurry asserted that the DPRK presents "a much different historical environment," adding that the US "deep concern about the North Korean nuclear program is also a principal difference."

2. US-DPRK Relations

US State Department Spokesman Nicholas Burns ("STATE DEPT. NOON BRIEFING, MARCH 12," USIA Transcript, 3/13/97) stated that 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, discussed "a variety of bilateral issues" in their meeting on Tuesday, including non-proliferation concerns, the Agreed Framework, the establishment of liaison offices, and joint efforts to recover the remains of US soldiers lost in the Korean War. Burns said that the two sides "have not yet agreed on a date to establish those liaison offices." Burns added, "Mr. Kim Gye Gwan, the Vice Foreign Minister, is in Washington but on a private visit, and as far as I know, he has not seen American Government officials." Burns suggested that more

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I. United States

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3. DMZ Land Mine Kills ROK Soldiers

The Associated Press ("DMZ LAND MINE KILLS 2 SKOREANS," Seoul, 3/13/97) reported that the ROK Defense Ministry said that two ROK soldiers were killed and seven others hurt by a land mine explosion in the Demilitarized Zone. The ministry said the accident took place while the soldiers were on patrol in the ROK side of the 2.5-mile-wide DMZ. A sergeant and a corporal were killed, and five of the seven injured, all enlisted men, were in critical condition. The Korean border remains the world's most heavily armed, with nearly 2 million battle-ready troops deployed on both sides and the length of the border zone strewn with land mines.

4. KEDO Financial Difficulties

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("KEDO \$35 MILLION IN DEBT, EXPECTS E.U. WILL JOIN SOON," Seoul, 3/13/97) reported that Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) director Stephen Bosworth said in a conference call Wednesday that KEDO is US\$35 million in debt and using borrowed funds to continue its mission. "We ran out of money long ago," Bosworth said. "We're roughly US\$35 million in debt, including US\$19 million Japan provided as collateral (against which) to borrow funds." Much of KEDO's economic problems stem from the US failure to provide the US\$25 million in funds it pledged for fiscal 1997, which began six months ago. The money is being held up, Bosworth said, because the executive branch has yet to obtain the waivers legally required from Congress to release public funds for the DPRK. Bosworth said that KEDO expects Congress will release the funds within the next few weeks, and also expects some economic relief when the European Union joins the group's executive board, which currently consists of the US, the ROK, and Japan. The EU, which is expected to join in the next few months, has pledged US\$20 million to the organization. KEDO was chartered in 1994 to provide the DPRK with US\$5 billion in new nuclear power reactors and alternative energy supplies by 2003, in order to encourage the DPRK to give up its nuclear program. This includes a commitment to supply 500,000 metric tons of fuel oil per year, which last year was met "with difficulty" due to the economic shortfall, Bosworth said. "We continue to have insufficient funding to buy fuel oil, but we face the same commitment in 1997," he said, noting that KEDO has been borrowing funds to pay for the oil, a process that "can't continue indefinitely." Bosworth also said that the light water reactor project is now on track again after a six-month delay stemming from the submarine incursion incident, and the relationship between KEDO inspectors and their DPRK counterparts is now "positive and businesslike." A KEDO delegation currently is in Sinpo, on the DPRK's northeast coast, working on a reactor site survey. "We are optimistic we can begin the physical work at the site in late spring," Bosworth said, adding that he is "cautiously optimistic" that KEDO can meet its target date of 2003 to complete building the reactor.

5. DPRK Reports New Farm Minister

The Washington Post ("N. KOREA GETS NEW FARMS CHIEF," 3/12/97, A24) carried a Reuters report that the DPRK appears to have named a new farm minister, the latest of a number of recent changes in the country's leadership structure. An official DPRK radio broadcast identified the new official as Han Ik-hyon, a longtime regional farm committee chairman, but did not say when Han succeeded Kim Won-jin, who had been farm minister since 1990 and was last mentioned by official media 10 months ago. US and ROK analysts speculated that Kim may have been fired because he had failed to restore agricultural production after widespread floods in 1995 and 1996 caused near famine. They said that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il's decision to elevate Han from relative obscurity is an indication that he may have lost patience with the efforts of veteran bureaucrats. Han's age was not given.

6. US Media Analysis of ROK Government

The Washington Post carried an editorial ("KOREAN COMPROMISE," 3/13/97, A22) assessing the

current status of democratization in the ROK. The editorial stated, "South Korea's democracy is better established than most, yet that Asian nation took a giant step backward 11 weeks ago" when President Kim Young-sam's ruling party, in a secret late-night session with opposition legislators absent, passed sweeping legislation gutting labor rights and reviving the "Draconian internal security law the dictators had used to persecute" dissidents including Kim himself. The editorial then noted that Kim and his government "caught hell for it, at home and abroad." The editorial also said that, with Kim's recent compromise on the labor bill, ROK democracy now "has taken two steps forward. The progress, showing that South Korean democratization remains essentially on track, deserves just as much attention." The editorial noted, however, "The internal security debate is still to come." Nevertheless, the editorial concluded, "Mr. Kim tried to get things done the old way, the generals' way. South Koreans showed they won't stand for that anymore."

7. World Nuclear Fuel Dangers Reported

The Associated Press (Edith M. Lederer, "STUDY: WEAPONS POORLY MONITORED," London, 3/13/97) reported that a three-year study published Thursday said that tons of weapons-grade plutonium and uranium produced over the last 50 years are inadequately monitored, risking misuse by rogue states and terrorists. The study, "Plutonium and Highly Enriched Uranium 1996: World Inventories, Capabilities and Policies," concluded there is too much nuclear material that is too easy to obtain. The three nuclear experts who wrote the study urged President Clinton and Russian President Boris Yeltsin to launch an international initiative to strengthen controls on weapons-grade plutonium and uranium. International efforts to end production, increase information about stockpiles, and tighten controls "are currently being frustrated on many fronts," the report said. "The controls of this material have to be absolutely watertight," one of the authors, William Walker, a professor at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, told a news conference. The study's other authors are David Albright, president of the Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security, and Frans Berkhout of the Science Policy Research Unit at Sussex University in England. Among its many points, the study observed that the DPRK's stock of plutonium remains unknown, posing a threat to implementation of the US-brokered agreement to freeze the DPRK's nuclear program.

8. Japanese Nuclear Plant Accident

Reuters ("JAPAN SHOCKED BY MISCUES IN NUCLEAR ACCIDENT," Tokyo, 3/13/97) reported that Japan reacted with shock and anger on Thursday to details emerging on the country's worst atomic accident, which showed lengthy delays in notifying residents of the crisis and outdated firefighting equipment. Politicians and nuclear safety officials joined the media in subjecting the Power Reactor and Nuclear Fuel Development Corp. (PNC), to withering criticism for mishandling a potential disaster at the Tokaimura nuclear reprocessing plant just 100 miles from Tokyo. The PNC was criticized for a lax reaction to the fire, aging fire equipment, and delays in informing local and national authorities -- including Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto -- who all learned first of the accident from television. The PNC was already reeling from an accident and cover-up at the Monju prototype fast-breeder reactor in December 1995. "If this tepid response reflects its best efforts in the disclosure and dissemination of information, the PNC's idiosyncratic mindset is hopeless," said the liberal daily newspaper Asahi Shimbun in an editorial. The fire and explosion on Tuesday exposed 37 workers to mild radiation, but all were subsequently given a clean bill of health.

II. Republic of Korea

1. DPRK Famine Situation

Facing a "difficult period" between June and September, after food stocks run dry and before the

harvest, the DPRK is asking foreign investors to pay for land with gasoline, flour and other foodstuffs, UN officials said Wednesday. Arthur Holcombe, chief representative for the United Nations Development Program in Beijing, said that officials he met with in the DPRK in early February fear they won't be able to deliver the current meager rations of about 200 grams (less than a half-pound) a day per person--less than half the amount needed to maintain body weight. The DPRK's economy has been in sharp decline since its vital barter trade disappeared in 1991 along with its communist patron, the Soviet Union. Floods the past two years have pushed weak collective agriculture toward the edge of famine. The DPRK has recently asked foreign investors to make down payments on land for projects in the remote Rajin-Sonbong Free Trade Zone with gasoline, flour or soybeans, said Ian Davies, a UN official advising the DPRK government on luring foreign investment. In the short term, Pyongyang is relying on an appeal by UN agencies for 121,000 tons of grain and on striking a deal with Cargill Ltd. for 500,000 tons of grain. (Korea Times, "N.KOREA WARNS FOOD STOCKS WILL RUN DRY IN JUNE," 03/13/97) [Ed. note: See related item in the US section of the March 12 Daily Report.]

III. Russian Federation

1. RF Top Level Changes

Nezavisimaia gazeta's Tatyana Koshkaryova and Aleksandr Tsytko ("BORIS YELTSIN HAS BROUGHT COUNTRY TO THE START OF A NEW ECONOMIC EXPERIMENT", Moscow, 1, 3/12/97) reported that RF President Boris Yeltsin yesterday signed a decree prescribing RF Premier Viktor Chernomyrdin to make proposals on the retirement of a number of top federal executive officials a week from now. The same day Mr. Yeltsin appointed Valentin Yumashev as the new Head of Presidential Administration to replace Anatoliy Chubais who was appointed RF First Vice Premier last week. The authors argued that the recent personnel changes at the top suggest that Mr. Yeltsin plans to enact radical changes at the top, with the so-called "young wolves" who benefited most from the reforms gaining the full power and the older political elite being overthrown. They added that the changes might lead to the disbanding of the legislative bodies, with new splits emerging in the society, the country entering a new phase of a "cold civil war", and some regions, particularly Moslem ones, seceding from the RF.

Kommersant-DAILY's Veronika Koutsylo ("YUMASHEV IS TOTALLY DIFFERENT FROM CHUBAIS", Moscow, 1, 3/12/97) reported that the newly appointed RF Presidential Administration Head Valentin Yumashev, 39, is expected to turn the Administration into just a "PR structure under the President". This will be in contrast to the period under Mr. Chubais when the Administration became a kind of a "second executive power."

Komsomolskaya Pravda's Olga Gerasimenko and Vasilii Oustyuzhanin ("A FORMER 'KOMSOMOLKA' JUNIOR EMPLOYEE APPOINTED TO BECOME A CHUBAIS", Moscow, 1, 3/12/97) reported on Valentin Yumashev's appointment yesterday as the Presidential Administration Head, characterizing it as another "challenge to public opinion," the first one having been Anatoliy Chubais' appointment as the First Vice Premier. The authors pointed out that "absolute loyalty to the President" was the decisive criterion, with state executive experience being ignored.

Segodnya's Grigoriy Bovt and Natalya Kalashnikova ("THE 'CH' TIME HAS COME FOR THE AUTHORITY", Moscow, 1, 3/12/97) reported on President Yeltsin decree ordering radical reductions and changes in the RF Government. A kind of a "managerial revolution" is expected with only Premier Viktor Chernomyrdin and newly appointed First Vice Premier Anatoliy Chubais safely holding their positions.

2. RF Eminent Persons Visit PRC

Segodnya's Natalya Arkhangel'skaya and Igor Moiseyev ("THE 'PARTY OF AUTHORITY' URGES DEMOCRATS TO UNITE WITH IT", Moscow, 2, 3/4/97) and Izvestia's Aleksandr Platkovskiy ("OUR HOME' MADE FRIENDS WITH THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CHINA", Moscow, 3, 3/12/97) reported on a press conference held yesterday by some leaders of the "Our Home Russia" (OHR), the pro-Governmental party which is nominally headed by RF Premier Viktor Chernomyrdin. The delegation of seven top OHR members, headed by the RF State Duma First Vice Speaker Aleksandr Shokhin, visited Beijing and Shanghai, met with PRC State Council Premier Li Peng, Chief of International Relations Department of the CPC Central Committee Li Shouchen, and other prominent persons there. A protocol for cooperation between the OHR and the CPC for the years 1997-1999 was signed, suggesting that the CPC does not associate itself with the Communist Party of the RF (CPRF), being "decades ahead" of the latter in its economic thinking. He also said that the "integration" of Hong Kong and Macao into the PRC could well be applied to Chechnya.

3. RF-PRC Border Demarcation Issues

Komsomolskaya Pravda's Zakhar Vinogradov and Andrey Savelyev ("WHO'S CONDENSING THE FOG OVER THE TUMANNAYA RIVER?", Moscow, 2, 3/12/97) reported that a former member of the RF-PRC Border Demarcation Commission, retired Gen. Valeriy Rozov called the RF- PRC Agreement of 5/16/91 on border demarcation a "shameful" act in RF diplomatic history, one close to treason. The dispute concerns the alleged possibility that the PRC will obtain some extra land space with access to the ocean and will create a free economic zone there which will negatively affect RF Far Eastern regions. The RF Foreign Ministry dismissed the allegations as "empty demagoguery." "Renmin Ribao" last year claimed that "the total area of territories taken away from China by the Tsarist Russia."

4. RF-Japan Relations

Izvestia's Sergey Agafonov ("A DIPLOMATIC RUDENESS", Moscow, 1, 3/7/97) reported that "RF First Vice Premier Viktor Ilyushin" managed "to radically spoil the atmosphere" of RF-Japanese relations. Earlier this week the second session of the bilateral intergovernmental committee on trade, economic, scientific and technology cooperation was to take place in Tokyo. Then two days before the session, Mr. Ilyushin made a phone call to Japan's delegation head, Foreign Minister Mr. Ikeda and allegedly said he could not leave RF due to "grave problems that emerged in the social sphere," asking for the session to be postponed till the time between April and June. After that Mr. Ilyushin flew to Losanne, Switzerland, to lobby for Saint Petersburg as the next Olympic Games host city. Izvestia's author commented that "the Japanese" have received "an undeserved slap on the face" and the RF Foreign Ministry has been "put into an idiotic position."

5. RF-ROK Embassy Real Estate Issue

Segodnya's Aleksandr Chudodeyev ("SEOUL REPAID MOSCOW ITS DEBT TO THE TSAR. BUT NOT TO THE FULL", Moscow, 4, 3/7/97) reported that the RF is to receive monetary compensation of about US\$28 million from the ROK for pre-revolutionary Russian Empire Embassy land property in central Seoul that was "nationalized" in 1970. The market price of the land in question is about US\$300-400 million, and in the early 1990s, the ROK suggested US\$3 million as compensation. Finally, the RF Foreign Ministry agreed to US\$28 million.

6. PRC To Continue Deng Xiaoping's Policies

Sovetskaya Rossiya ("THESE DAYS BEIJING", Moscow, 7, 3/6/97) reported the PRC Chairman Jiang Zemin as stating at the session of the All-China Assembly of People's Representatives that the adherence to Deng Xiaoping's theory of socialism with Chinese specifics is of utmost importance to

the cause of modernization and revival of the nation.

7. PRC 1997 Defense Budget

Pravda-5 ("PLANET PULSE BEIJING", Moscow, 3, 3/4/97) reported that the present US\$80 billion defense budget of the PRC will be increased by 12%. The PRC's 3 million person-strong Armed Forces are the biggest in the world, but, according to Western experts, use "rather obsolete" technology.

Segodnya's Aleksandr Koretskiy ("CHINESE ARMY HAS GOT FUNDS TO ARM ITSELF", Moscow, 4, 3/6/97) reported that the "Chinese military with little effort have managed to obtain from the country's political leaders new substantial concessions." The PRC State Council already decided to increase salaries of PLA officers by 15-20%. Historically, such decisions have been seen as a sign of a political leaders' doubts about the loyalty of the military. The PRC's annual defense expenditure growth rate has been over 10% for the last five years, and the PRC is actively negotiating with the RF over the possibility of buying additional Su-27 and Su-30 airplanes, a missile defense system, Kilo submarines and two destroyers.

8. PRC Military's Leadership Role

Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye ("IN BRIEF CHINA", Moscow, 1, 3/7-14/97, #9(36)) reported on the role of the military leadership in the PRC, with the Central Military Council as being of great political importance. After Deng Xiaoping's death PRC Defense Minister Gen. Chi Haotian and Gen. Chang Wannan play a key role there, both being the CMC Deputy Chairmen and both being close to Chairman Jiang Zemin. Chang Chen, 82, and Lt.Gen. Wan Zhulin, 68, are also considered to be important persons. The latter was Deng Xiaoping's military secretary since 1977.

9. US Military Official Expects DPRK Collapse

Segodnya ("WASHINGTON CALCULATING THE CONSEQUENCES OF A DPRK COLLAPSE", Moscow, 4, 3/12/97) reported that US Army General John Tilelli Jr., the commander of US forces in the ROK, told the National Security Committee of the US House of Representatives that the DPRK will suffer a "collapse" unless massive foreign aid is provided to it. He expressed concern about the consequences of a "potentially explosive" situation. [Ed. note: See related item in the US section of the March 6 Daily Report.]

10. Hwang Defection

Segodnya's Ivan Shomov ("A MADMAN FROM THE 'FORTRESS OF SOCIALISM'", Moscow, 4, 3/4/97) cited a ROK diplomat in Beijing as saying yesterday that there might be delays in the settlement of the issue of a former Korean Workers' Party Central Committee Secretary Hwang Jang-yop who on 2/12/97 defected to the ROK Embassy while on a visit to Beijing.

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

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