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IN TODAY'S REPORT:

I. United States

- 1. DPRK Military Exercises
- 2. Nautilus DPRK Energy Project
- 3. Japanese Wives of DPRK Citizens
- 4. ROK Amnesty
- 5. ROK Financial Crisis
- 6. US-PRC Nuclear Cooperation
- 7. Nuclear Waste Shipment to Japan

II. Republic of Korea

- 1. US-DPRK Relations
- 2. DPRK Military
- 3. ROK-Japan Relations

II. Japan

- 1. DPRK Famine
- 2. Japanese-ROK Relations
- 3. ROK-DPRK Relations
- 4. ROK-DPRK Red Cross Talks
- 5. Japanese Nuclear Security

IV. Extended Excerpts

- 1. Text of DPRK Mobilization Statement

I. United States

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1. DPRK Military Exercises

The Associated Press (John Leicester, "NKOREA ENTERS MILITARY MOBILIZATION," Beijing, 03/13/98) and Reuters (Bill Tarrant, "FAMINE-PLAGUED N. KOREA BEGINS WAR PREPARATION," Seoul, 03/13/98) reported that the DPRK on Friday distributed a government statement to foreign diplomats and aid workers in Pyongyang which said that the DPRK had begun a "wartime mobilization" effective at 10 p.m. local time on Thursday. The statement alleged that the four-party peace talks in Geneva "might be a smoke screen aimed at attacking us." It added that the war games required strict limits on the entry of foreigners into the country and that foreigners would not be allowed outside of Pyongyang without "official business." One Western diplomat in Pyongyang said that Foreign Ministry officials who issued the statement wore military uniforms, which was "very unusual." It was the first time the DPRK government had summoned foreign diplomats to receive such an announcement. Douglas Coutts, a UN aid official, stated, "We were told that it was open ended. It would appear that these activities are not the normal military activities." An anonymous foreign aid official said he viewed the mobilization as "martial law." Another aid worker based in Pyongyang said that for almost two weeks the DPRK had been staging military exercises similar to those he witnessed last year, adding that there was no obvious increase in the military presence in Pyongyang and no curfew had been announced. Meanwhile Zao Mingji, a spokeswoman for the PRC's Tumen city government, stated that PRC officials have spotted no unusual activities across the Tumen River, and that traders crossed the bridge from the DPRK's Namyang city in typical numbers. A US State Department official stated, "To the best of our information, we're not aware of any North Korea military activity that is outside the range of any North Korean military activity that we're familiar with." [Ed. note: See below for a transcript of the DPRK statement.]

Reuters ("SEOUL SAYS NORTH'S EMERGENCY STEPS AN EXERCISE," Seoul, 03/13/98) reported that a senior military officer in the ROK defense ministry said on Friday that the mobilization announced by the DPRK was part of annual military exercises. He stated, "This is a normal annual training exercise. It is usually held when food reserves are low and there is a danger of internal rioting."

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2. Nautilus DPRK Energy Project

The San Jose Mercury News (T.T. Nhu, "NORTH KOREA OPENING DOOR EVER SO SLIGHTLY TO ACCEPT WINDMILLS FOR POWER," San Jose, 03/11/98) reported that a team of engineers and environmental specialists from the Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development will travel to the DPRK in May to install windmills that will produce electricity in villages on the coastal plain southwest of Pyongyang. The mission follows a visit last fall to Berkeley, sponsored by Nautilus, by a delegation of DPRK energy specialists, including three engineers and the secretary general of the Korean anti-nuclear Peace Committee, to learn about solar and wind energy, the first-ever technical training mission in the US approved by the governments of both the US and the DPRK. [Ed. note: See DPRK Renewable Energy Delegation Visits US.] Nautilus co-director Peter Hayes said that the current DPRK famine opens the way for possible engagement of the DPRK. Hayes stated, "The famine is an important opportunity for both sides -- North and South Korea and the United States to move ahead." University of California, Berkeley emeritus professor Robert Scalapino said that the mission has a chance to help open the DPRK to the outside world. He stated, "Nautilus does useful work concentrating on energy, which ... enables North Korea to make policy change via small energy projects." Speaking of his own visit to the DPRK, Scalapino said, "I came away from North Korea with this feeling it wasn't a revolutionary society. It was a traditional society with one party and a leadership that had a religious aura backed by a strong military. The aloofness, the isolation, the very rudimentary lifestyle was a confirmation of my assumptions that Korea wasn't

this monolith we'd built it up to be. In private conversations, people could drop the polemics and speak in realistic terms about their national concerns." He added, "Policy shift is taking place right before our eyes." [Full text]

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3. Japanese Wives of DPRK Citizens

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("HOMECOMING BY JAPANESE WOMEN IN N. KOREA DELAYED - KYODO," Tokyo, 03/13/98) reported that Japanese government sources told Kyodo News Friday that the next homecoming visit by Japanese women married to DPRK men is likely to be delayed to April or later. The sources said that the DPRK did not give a clear answer to Japan's request to confirm this month's planned visit, nor did it provide a list of names of women to be included in the group. They added that it would be difficult to have the visit take place in March because, even if the DPRK answers soon, the Japanese government requires around two weeks for such procedures as contacting the women's relatives.

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4. ROK Amnesty

The New York Times (Nicholas D. Kristof, "SOUTH KOREA'S NEW LEADER GRANTS WIDE AMNESTY," Tokyo, 03/13/98), the Associated Press (Sang-Hun Choe, "S. KOREA GRANTS AMNESTY TO MILLIONS," Seoul, 03/13/98) and Reuters (Jean Yoon, "S. KOREAN LEADER GRANTS MASSIVE AMNESTY," Seoul, 03/13/98) reported that ROK President Kim Dae-jung on Friday approved the most sweeping amnesty in ROK history of his country, clearing the police and personnel records of 5.5 million citizens. ROK Justice Minister Park Sang-chun stated, "The purpose is to make possible a new beginning and to promote unity and overcome the economic crisis." Most of the amnesty applies to traffic violations or records of demotions of civil servants, but it includes the release of 2,300 prison inmates. Park said the amnesty would free all political prisoners over the age of 70, even if they have not changed their views. However, the amnesty did not apply to 68-year old convicted spy Woo Yong-gak, the world's longest-serving political prisoner. The amnesty will also lead to the release of labor leaders convicted of inciting illegal strikes and of 16 people convicted of violating the National Security Law. However, Suzy Kim, the international secretary for the human rights group Minkahyup, stated, "Today's announcement is terribly disappointing. The total number of political prisoners to be released is 74. We had submitted a list of 500 who we thought should be pardoned." She said that her group would hold a demonstration later Friday to demand further releases. So Jun-shik, a prison rights campaigner, stated, "We think at least 150 prisoners of conscience should be freed if you want to talk about national reconciliation." Oh Wan-ho, secretary general of the ROK chapter of Amnesty International, called the government's action "deplorable," attributing it to fear of a backlash from conservatives. Amnesty International said in a statement from London. "The continued imprisonment of so many people for their political views is unacceptable in an open and democratic society."

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5. ROK Financial Crisis

The New York Times (Timothy L. O'Brien, "SHORT-TERM KOREAN DEBT CONVERTED BY BANK PLAN," New York, 03/13/98) reported that, in a joint announcement Thursday night, the ROK Ministry of Finance and Economy and Citicorp said that US$21.3 billion of approximately US$22 billion in short-term debt owed by ROK companies to international banks had been exchanged for

new one-, two-, and three- year loans guaranteed by the ROK government. William R. Rhodes, a Citicorp vice chairman who is senior coordinator of the bank negotiations, stated, "I am gratified by the banks' response, which is a vote of confidence in Korea and the government's economic reform program."

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6. US-PRC Nuclear Cooperation

The Washington Post (Barton Gellman and John Pomfret, "U.S. ACTION STYMIED CHINA SALE TO IRAN," 03/13/98, A01) and the Washington Times (Bill Gertz, "CHINA IN NEW NUCLEAR SALES EFFORT," 03/13/98) reported that Robert Einhorn, US deputy assistant secretary of state for proliferation, revealed during a hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Thursday that the Clinton administration discovered and protested secret negotiations between the PRC and Iran for hundreds of tons of material used in enriching uranium to weapons grade. Administration officials said that a series of top- level contacts between the US and PRC governments last month appears to have put a stop to the transaction, and that they now are confident that the China Nuclear Energy Industry Corp. in Beijing will not deliver the chemical at issue, anhydrous hydrogen fluoride (AHF), to the Isfahan Nuclear Research Center in central Iran. The deadline for the US Congress to vote against nuclear cooperation with the PRC ends next week. Henry Sokolski, a former Defense Department official who heads the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center, said negotiations on uranium enrichment suggest "the Chinese cannot be held to their word on what was the most disturbing facility we wanted terminated."

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7. Nuclear Waste Shipment to Japan

The Associated Press (Eric Talmadge, "JAPAN ALLOWS NUCLEAR SHIP TO UNLOAD," Tokyo, 03/13/98) reported that Governor Morio Kimura on Friday permitted a ship carrying 30 tons of nuclear waste to unload its cargo after Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto offered assurances that the waste would be moved from the seaside village of Rokkasho.

II. Republic of Korea

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1. US-DPRK Relations

An official from the US Department of State announced on March 12 that the US will push for a military hotline with the DPRK during a four-party peace talks slated for March 16 in Geneva. In addition, the US will urge the two Koreas to suspend mutual slandering. (Chosun Ilbo, "US WISHES MILITARY HOTLINE WITH THE DPRK," 03/13/98)

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2. DPRK Military

Kim Jong-il has recently visited the 406 DPRK naval bases and emphasized improved combat readiness and ideological soundness, the DPRK's Korea Central News Agency reported on March 12. Kim's visit to the military camp marks his sixteenth official tour and seventh visit to a military camp. (Kyunghyang Ilbo, "KIM JONG-IL CHAMPIONS STRONGER NAVY," 03/13/98)

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3. ROK-Japan Relations

Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto's top foreign policy advisor delivered an "oral message" to ROK President Kim Dae-jung on March 11, saying that Japan wishes to resume the suspended fisheries talks in the near future. Seiichiro Noboru, chief counselor for external affairs at the Cabinet Secretariat, who arrived in Seoul for a three-day visit on March 11, met Lim Dong-won, ROK senior presidential secretary on foreign affairs and national security, and ROK Foreign Affairs-Trade Minister Park Chung- soo. (Korea Times, Son Key-young "TOKYO WISHES TO RESUME FISHING TALKS SOON," 03/12/98)

II. Japan

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1. DPRK Famine

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("FAO REPORTS DPRK FOOD STOCK MAY RUN OUT," 03/13/98) reported that the Japanese office of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said that the DPRK's food stocks may run out soon. According to the report, the DPRK's food grains, including rice, wheat, and corn, are expected to run out by the end of April or early May. In addition, the declining economy may restrict the supply of production goods, and the prospect for rice crop this year is also severe. Although FAO is calling for international food aid, the organization also points out the need for the DPRK's own reconstruction of its domestic agriculture and economy.

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2. Japanese-ROK Relations

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("JAPANESE SPECIAL ENVOY LAYS GROUND WORK FOR JAPAN-ROK SUMMIT MEETING," Seoul, 03/13/98) reported that Japanese Prime Ministerial Special Envoy Seiichiro Nobori met with ROK Mister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Park Chung-su in Seoul and conveyed to him Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto's message that Prime Minister wants to develop Japanese- ROK relations in a friendly and cooperative way. Although the ROK side expressed their regret over Japan's decision to terminate the Japan-ROK fishery talks, both sides agreed to the need for developing an "atmosphere" toward the resumption of talks.

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3. ROK-DPRK Relations

ROK Ministry of National Unification head Kang In-dok told the Asahi Shimbun ("ROK UNIFICATION BOARD HEAD SAYS ROK WILL KEEP PROMISE OF KEDO COST," Seoul, 03/12/98) that the ROK will pay for the cost of the light water reactor project, including the cost for Korean-made components and the Korean workers' salaries. Kang stated, "Despite the ongoing economic crisis, we will keep the international promise we made." Regarding food aid to the DPRK, he said, "Whenever the DPRK makes an official offer, we will be ready for a dialogue and sincerely do our best." Regarding the former Kim Young-sam administration, he pointed out that the administration announced its desire for the collapse of the DPRK and gave the impression that the administration lacked consistency in policy. He also emphasized President Kim Dae-jung's policy to separate economic cooperation from politics, and stressed separation of the Four Party Peace Talks from

economic cooperation and food aid.

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4. ROK-DPRK Red Cross Talks

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("DPRK ALSO PROPOSES NORTH-SOUTH RED CROSS MEETING," Seoul, 03/12/98) reported that in response to the proposal by the ROK Red Cross on March 18 to resume the North-South meeting on the Korean Peninsula, the DPRK on March 11 proposed resuming the talks in Beijing on March 25. According to the report, the proposals were made through the Panmunjom hot line, and the talks will be on food aid to the DPRK. The report added that the talks have been deadlocked since the fourth meeting in last December, when the two sides disagreed over the transparency of material distribution, and that the ROK is likely to accept the proposal.

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5. Japanese Nuclear Security

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("NUCLEAR CONTROL CENTER WAS ROBBED TWICE," 03/13/98) reported that Japan's Nuclear Control Center, which collects and controls nuclear information and data, was robbed twice between late last month to early this month. The police arrested a fifty-six year-old man on March 12 who stole five laptop personal computers that have access to sensitive nuclear data. The center claims that there was no information leakage, but there was no crime preventive sensor installed in the building, according to the report.

IV. Extended Excerpts

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1. Text of DPRK Mobilization Statement

Reuters ("TEXT OF N.KOREA'S STATEMENT ON 'WAR MOBILISATION'," Seoul, 03/13/98) reported that the DPRK government distributed the following statement in English to the foreign community in the DPRK: "Today we called this emergency gathering to brief you of some points which the Diplomatic Corps in the DPRK and foreigners staying in our country need to make for reference concerning the important military exercises to be held in our country. This drill is held on a nation-wide scale according to the requirements of the prevailing situation. As is well known, our country suffered grave losses in its overall economy including agricultural sector due to the conservative natural calamities which have continued to hit upon our country for several years. What we find a serious concern, however, is the fact that the outside is taking advantage of this to grow its military threat. Ostensibly, we find the 'four way talks' which is underway and various professed peace initiatives. But there appears ill-boding secret movement of military maneuvers behind the scenes... Under the signboard of so called 'win-win strategy', the U.S. used the Iraqi crisis to have reinforced numerous armed forces and war equipments including a new air strike unit in south Korea. South Korea is now plunged unto a catastrophic financial crisis, but large scale military exercises are increasing in their numbers without any sign of letting up and, as for their nature, they are snowballing the dimension of attack. What is more serious is that such military maneuvers are coupled with an all-out propaganda campaign which stretches the truth as if we would make an armed provocation over our own food shortage and present financial crisis in south Korea and accordingly there should be a 'preemptive strike' against the DPRK.... All this makes us to come to an eventual suspicion that the 'four-way talks' described by the U.S. as a peace talks might be a

smoke screen aimed at attacking us.

"With all this in consideration, we are now in an unusual situation which can be seen only before a war and this requires us to keep a more vigilance and maintain a high defense posture of the country even at the time when we undergo economic hardship. The whole nation goes into a war time mobilization state from zero hours last night following the requirements of this military exercises. This means that the war time system and order apply not only to the regular armed forces but also to the national economy and overall social life. In this regard, I declare the following points to be considered for reference by the Diplomatic Corps in the DPRK and other foreigners staying in our country. First, during the military exercises, we will place a strict limitation on the entry to our country by the personnel except those of our citizens. Second, we will not approve of any visit to local areas beyond the Pyongyang city by foreigners without any particular official business during this period. Third, the command of military exercises should give a case-by-case permission to any request to visit the local areas related to the food assistance during the period of this exercises. The above referential points are the inevitable measures taken into consideration of the goal and nature of this exercises which are conducted in the light of the requirements of the prevailing situation. Therefore, I hope you will understand and make reference to the above points though you have some inconveniences."

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.

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