NAPSNet Daily Report 14 April, 1999

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report 14 April, 1999", NAPSNet Daily Report, April 14, 1999, https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-14-april-1999/

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I. United States

1. Four-Party Peace Talks

US State Department Deputy Spokesman James B. Foley ("FIFTH ROUND OF KOREA FOUR-PARTY TALKS TO CONVENE APRIL 24," Washington, USIA Text, 04/13/99) released the following statement: "As a result of Four Party working group consultations begun in New York April 5, the U.S., China, the ROK, and the DPRK have agreed to convene the Fifth Plenary of the Four Party Talks in Geneva beginning April 24, 1999. U.S. Special Envoy for the Korean Peace Talks, Ambassador Charles Kartman will lead the U.S. delegation. The United States will chair the Fifth

Plenary, per the agreed rotation. The U.S. goals in the Four Party Talks continue to be the reduction of tension on the Korean Peninsula and replacing the Armistice by the achievement of a permanent peace arrangement there. Two subcommittees respectively addressed these goals during the Fourth Plenary and will continue their work at the Fifth Plenary. As in the past, the Swiss government is providing facilitative assistance for the talks, and we are grateful for its support."

2. ROK-Russian Relations

Reuters ("SOUTH KOREA MAY TAKE RUSSIAN SUBS TO PAY OFF DEBTS," Seoul, 04/14/99) reported that the ROK Defense Ministry said in a statement on Tuesday that the ROK is considering accepting submarines from Russia as payment for Russian debts. The statement said, "The ministry is planning to examine the request by Russia until the end of May by gathering the opinions of the Navy and Joint Chiefs of Staff." Russia owes the ROK about US$1.7 billion in principal and interest.

3. Pakistan Missile Test

The Associated Press (Kathy Gannon, "PAKISTAN TESTS NUKE-CAPABLE MISSILE," Islamabad, 04/14/99) reported that Pakistan on Wednesday test-fired a new Ghauri II ballistic missile. Anonymous Pakistan government officials said that the Ghauri II has a range of 1,240 miles and can carry a payload of 2,200 pounds of either conventional or nuclear explosives. A statement issued by Pakistan's Foreign Ministry after the test said, "Pakistan does not want a nuclear and missile race in South Asia." Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh responded, "There is no arms race in South Asia." In the US, White House press secretary Joe Lockhart said, "We have expressed to both sides that the dueling tests do not promote a spirit of greater cooperation and understanding in the region. We are disappointed that they both moved forward on this and have expressed that concern directly." A statement issued by the Japanese Foreign Ministry said, "the missile testing could be detrimental to peace and stability in the region." Russia warned that the test could "trigger a race of nuclear missile armaments in Asia." Pakistan Ambassador to Russia Mansoor Alam argued that his country needed to ensure its national security in light of India's "growing nuclear might." According to newspaper reports, India was notified Tuesday of Pakistan's plans to test fire the missile.

Dow Jones Newswires ("PAKISTAN MAY TEST 2ND BALLISTIC MISSILE WED" 04/14/99, Islamabad) reported that Japan's Kyodo new agency quoted Pakistan military sources as saying that the country may test-fire a short-range Shaheen ballistic missile soon following the test launch of a medium-range Ghauri II missile. The report said that the liquid-fueled Shaheen has a range of 750 kilometers, while the range of the solid-fueled Ghauri II is 2,000 km.

4. Russian Reaction to Pakistan Missile Test

The Associated Press ("RUSSIA VOICES CONCERN ON PAKISTAN'S BALLISTIC MISSILE TESTS," Moscow, 04/14/99) reported that Russia expressed concern Wednesday about Pakistan's announcement that it test-fired a medium-range ballistic missile. ITAR-Tass news agency quoted an unidentified Russian official as saying that Pakistan's move "can trigger a race of nuclear missile armaments in Asia." The official added that the move risked "destabilizing the situation in both the Asian region and on a broader scale."

II. Republic of Korea

1. DPRK Telecommunications

JoongAng Ilbo ("COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT INSTALLED IN N.K. TO ATTRACT BUSINESS," Seoul, 04/14/99) reported that the ROK Ministry of Unification (MOU) announced on April 14 that the DPRK is making efforts to prepare information and communication equipment to promote foreign investment. The MOU stated that the DPRK recently set up 500 mobile phone circuits in Najin and Sonbong, North Hamkyoung Province, and opened the Najin information center. MOU also reported that construction for the idolization of Kim Jong-il and for political propaganda accounted for only 17.6 percent of the whole construction during the same period. This figure represented a sharp decrease compared to the 81 percent for the same period in 1997. MOU added that the DPRK has continued to record negative economic growth for 9 years since 1990. Even though the DPRK continues to experience economic difficulties, they built a lot of small electric generating plants during the second half of 1998.

2. US Forces in ROK

Korea Herald ("PRESIDENTIAL AIDE DENIES REPORTS ON REMARKS ON USFK," Seoul, 04/14/99) reported that a high-ranking presidential aide denied news reports that the ROK and the US discussed the status of the US Forces Korea (USFK) during talks on former US Defense Secretary William Perry's upcoming report on DPRK policy. In a rare press release issued under his own name, Senior Presidential Secretary for Foreign Affairs and National Security Lim Dong-won said, "Seoul and Washington never discussed the issue of the USFK while talking about Perry's report on the North." Lim said that a debate on restructuring and relocation of all forces on the Korean Peninsula is only possible when the ROK and the US hold substantial talks to bring a permanent peace to the peninsula. Earlier, other reports said that Lim, who visited Moscow last month, was told by Russian Vice Foreign Minister Grigori Karashin that the DPRK wants to change the USFK's status instead of demanding its withdrawal.

JoongAng Ilbo ("HONG ASKS U.S. TO RETURN KOREAN PROPERTY," Seoul, 04/14/99) reported that Hong Soon-young, ROK Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, asserted on April 14, "We expect the return of Korean government property currently in use by the US and a change in the status of the US army as early as possible." Hong, in an address to the ROK-US Association meeting, said, "These problems should be resolved in the 21st century." It is the first time the minister has asked the US for a response on the issue of the status of US forces. He continued, "America's world strategy sometimes cannot meet with Korea's policy directions and a continuing mature relationship is possible when there is fair and practical negotiation with each other."

3. ROK Human Rights

Korea Herald ("GNP TO DRAW INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION TO HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS," Seoul, 04/14/99) reported that the opposition Grand National Party (GNP) will attract international attention to the Kim Dae- jung government's human rights violations by presenting cases of such violations to the UN Human Rights Committee meeting now under way in Geneva. To this end, the GNP will send a four-member delegation to Geneva this coming Saturday, the party announced. The delegation includes Reps. Chung Hyung-keun, Lee Shin-bom, Kim Young-sun, and Cho Woong-kyu.

4. Russian Embassy in ROK

Korea Herald ("RUSSIA TO BUILD NEW EMBASSY BUILDING IN DOWNTOWN SEOUL," Seoul, 04/14/99) reported that Russia has recently notified the ROK government that it will construct its

new embassy building in the heart of Seoul in June. The new Russian Embassy will be built on an 8,000-sq. meter lot--the same space as that allowed for a new ROK Embassy in Moscow--in Chong-dong, across from City Hall, it said. Under a land swap deal agreed to in 1997, the ROK and Russia were to lease the same amount of land space in their respective capital cities to each other's diplomatic missions for 99 years. ROK Foreign Affairs and Trade Ministry officials said that the Russian Embassy, now located in Daechi-dong, southern Seoul, has asked the government to ease some construction restrictions regarding their new embassy. For instance, they said, the site for the new Russian Embassy, located right next to Toksu Palace, is categorized as a cultural-property protection area with limits on the heights of new buildings. Russian Ambassador to the ROK Evgeny Afanasiev on Monday asked the Ministry of Construction and Transportation to relieve the limit. ROK officials said, however, they see no significant problems in building the new Russian Embassy building. Russia plans to construct a 10-story building with a two-level basement in Seoul while the ROK is scheduled to build a five-story structure with a two-level basement in Moscow.

III. People's Republic of China

1. DPRK Economics

People's Daily ("DPRK INCREASES INVESTMENT TO ECONOMIC CONSTRUCTION," Pyongyang, 4/13/99, A7) reported that the DPRK Finance Minister delivered a report at the country's budget in 1999 at the DPRK Supreme People's Conference on April 7. According to the minister, the DPRK's revenues and total expenditure in 1998 respectively were 19.7908 billion won and 20.0252 billion won, which respectively completed 98 percent and 99 percent of that year's budget. Although having not recovered to the level in the early years in 1990s, the Finance Minister said, the revenues of DPRK have been augmented compared to those of 1997. The report pointed out that the DPRK Government plans to further increase the investment in economic construction. In 1999, both revenue and total expenditure of the DPRK are expected to reach 20.3817 billion won, growing 3 percent and 1.8 percent respectively.

2. Japan's Policy to DPRK

China Daily ("JAPAN MULLS LIFTING DPRK FLIGHT BAN," Tokyo, 4/14/99, A11) reported that Japan is considering lifting a punitive sanction that bans charter flights to the DPRK. Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura said on April 13 that the ban may be dropped or suspended to allow a direct flight to Pyongyang for a planned delegation led by former Social Democratic Party Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama in late April. "Although nothing has been decided concretely, the government is considering it with the Murayama team, and the foreign and transportation ministries," Komura told a news conference.

3. Zhu Rongji's Visit to US

People's Daily ("GRATIFIED AT THE SUCCESS OF PREMIER ZHU'S VISIT," 4/14/99, A6) carried a commentary saying that PRC Premier Zhu Rongji's visit to the US was an arduous but successful trip. The visit was made when Washington was filled with an anti-China atmosphere. The decision to start the visit as scheduled shows the courage of Chinese leaders to deal with complicated issues and the PRC's confidence in the justice of its policy toward the US. The commentary concluded that Premier Zhu's visit to the US was a success and has increased the US Government and public's understanding of China.

Jie Fang Daily ("PREMIER ZHU'S VISIT TO US HAS STRATEGIC MEANING," 4/13/99, A7) reported that the China International Relations Association and Jie Fang Daily co-sponsored a meeting on the afternoon of April 13. During the discussion, experts and scholars from different institutions located in Shanghai exchanged their views on the background, meaning and other issues related to PRC Premier Zhu Rongji's visit to the US. The participants said that Premier Zhu's visit happened in a specific environment and background and the visit has strategic meaning. They believe that Premier Zhu's visit will be conducive to the prevention of the downward momentum of Sino-US relations and to pushing the Clinton Administration to implement a positive engagement policy toward the PRC. As for the issue of the PRC's admission to the World Trade Organization, the experts said that the PRC's joining the organization would benefit both the PRC and the US. It is expected that economic and trade relations between the PRC and the US will jump into a new stage. The differences between the two countries on human rights and security issues will remain, however, and will require the two sides to carry out arduous dialogues, the experts said.

4. Indian Missile Test

China Daily ("SPOKESMAN REGRETS NEW INDIAN MISSILE TEST," 4/14/99, A1) reported that PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman Sun Yuxi expressed "regret and concern over the missile test by Indian on Sunday." Sun said at a news briefing on April 13 that India's missile test violated the spirit of Resolution 1172 of the UN Security Council, which called on India to cease the development of ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons. The test would initiate a new arms race in South Asia, Sun said. The PRC has noted that India and Pakistan have moved towards strengthening dialogue and increasing trust recently, according to Sun. The PRC hopes the two countries will continue to solve their differences and problems peacefully through patient, frank and meaningful dialogues, which serve the fundamental interests of peoples in South Asia, he added.

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.
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Produced by the Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development in partnership with:
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