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2. DPRK Flood Repair Work

The Associated Press ("NKOREANS TO REPAIR FLOOD DAMAGE," Tokyo, 3/14/97) reported that the DPRK's state-run Korean Central Radio reported Friday that the country has mobilized thousands of people to replant trees and repair river embankments damaged by severe flooding. Some 13 million trees have been planted and 390 miles of river banks have been repaired in the 10 days since the effort began, the report said. The Radio Press monitoring service said more than 15,000 people were mobilized each day in one city to construct banks and levees. This is the second year in a row that flood damage has required such an effort.

3. ROK Views of DPRK Famine

The Washington Post (Mary Jordan, "MISTRUST OF N. KOREAN REGIME LEAVES MANY IN SEOUL SKEPTICAL OF FAMINE REPORTS," 3/9/97, A22) reported that the world's minimal humanitarian response to the DPRK's famine situation is due in part to mistrust of the Stalinist regime that rules the country. Donors fear that food aid will be funneled to the country's massive military instead of to its needy civilian population. Additionally, the DPRK's strict isolationist policy has prevented the media from documenting and broadcasting images of hunger that might generate more international sympathy. The problem is especially sensitive in Seoul, the ROK capital, where as many as one in four people has a relative in the DPRK. Many ROK citizens believe the DPRK has exaggerated the crisis to attract more food to feed its military and prolong the life of its repressive regime. Even though independent aid workers verify the food shortages and have been given access to the countryside in recent weeks, many people on the streets of Seoul believe that such suffering is not possible or that DPRK citizens are already accustomed to deprivation. The reports of how many people have died from diseases related to hunger vary drastically, from hundreds to 100,000.

However, aid workers say the crisis is now at a critical point. One or two more months of eating just a half bowl of rice a day, or less than 20 percent of what a person needs for adequate nourishment, will have devastating effects on people's health, they say.

4. US Nuclear Weapons Testing

Reuters ("US TO START BUILDING LAB FOR NUKE TESTS," Washington, 3/14/97) reported that the US Energy Department said Tuesday it had approved construction of a US$1.2 billion stadium-sized laser center to test nuclear weapons without exploding them. The National Ignition Facility will have "50 times the energy of any laser now in existence and will produce, for the first time in a laboratory setting, conditions of matter close to those that occur in the center of the sun," the Energy Department said. The Department said that the facility, which will be used to simulate reactions in nuclear warheads, is needed to maintain the aging US nuclear stockpile while abiding by a global ban on nuclear testing. But disarmament advocates said that the facility could help spawn a new generation of nuclear weapons far more powerful than today's, subverting the aim of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). "Just the appearance of the facility and common sense tells you that it's going to be useful for developing new weapons systems, even though you might not be able to deploy them without testing," said Edwin Lyman, scientific director of the Nuclear Control Institute. He added that construction of the facility would send the wrong signal to countries that the US is trying to discourage from building nuclear weapons. "They would just assume that the United States is doing this to circumvent the CTBT. The perception itself is destabilizing," he said.

5. US Budget Request for KEDO

Thomas McNamara, the US assistant secretary of state for political-military affairs, appearing before the US Senate subcommittee on International Economic Policy, Export and Trade Promotion on March 12 ("ASST. SEC. MCNAMARA 3/12 CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY," USIA Transcript Excerpts, 3/14/97), testified in support of the Clinton administration's 1998 fiscal year security assistance budget request for foreign operations, which totals US$13.324 billion. The budget includes a variety of programs in several categories. Under the category of "Confronting Transnational Security Threats" are the programs comprising US arms control and non-proliferation efforts, amounting to US$101 million of the budget request. Included in this category is the US$30 million request for funding of the US contribution to the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), the international consortium established to implement the October 21, 1994, US-DPRK Agreed Framework under which the DPRK has pledged to dismantle its nuclear weapons capability. McNamara described KEDO's central tasks as management of the financing and construction of two light-water nuclear reactors in the DPRK, providing annual shipments of heavy fuel oil to the DPRK, and implementation of other aspects of the Agreed Framework. McNamara said the KEDO budget request "is essential to finance KEDO's administrative expenses and projects, particularly the provision of heavy fuel oil to the DPRK." McNamara noted, however, that the majority of these expenses, as well as the nuclear reactor project, are supported by other KEDO members. McNamara said, "Eleven countries, spread over five continents, have become members of KEDO, reflecting the organization's global character, composition, and significance. The US contribution is necessary to demonstrate US leadership and to supplement and leverage contributions from other countries. Without this funding, KEDO will not be able to operate or carry out its objectives, thereby weakening the credibility of US leadership, jeopardizing the implementation of the Agreed Framework, and contributing to rising security tensions on the Korean Peninsula. Full funding of this request is the best way to promote US objectives for peace, security, and nuclear non-proliferation in Northeast Asia." [Ed. note: In this request, KEDO funding accounts for only 0.225 percent of the foreign operations budget. However, opposition in the US Congress has delayed the US contribution in the past. For more information on the effect of such delays on KEDO

operations, see "KEDO Financial Difficulties" in the US section of the March 13 Daily Report.]

II. Republic of Korea

1. DPRK-KEDO Talks on Payments

The DPRK and the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) have agreed to open negotiations in New York on Tuesday to sign a protocol which will address financial obligations in the event that the DPRK defaults on payments for two light-water reactors. "It is likely to take a month before KEDO and North Korea wrap up their talks," said an official of the Office for the Planning of the Light-Water Reactor (LWR) Project. The KEDO delegation will consist of officials and experts from the ROK, the US, and Japan, the three main financial suppliers in the multi-billio--dollar reactor project. The DPRK will also dispatch a seven-member delegation, headed by Chang Chang-chon, research commissioner at the Foreign Ministry. KEDO and the DPRK are scheduled to sign more than 10 protocols to successfully implement a supply contract signed in New York in December 1995. So far, the two parties have signed five protocols on privileges and immunities, transportation, communications, the takeover of reactor sites and services. (Korea Times, "NK, KEDO TO HOLD TALKS ON NON-PAYMENT PROTOCOL," 03/14/97)

2. ROK Development Plans Near DPRK Border

The ROK government has commissioned a state-run think tank to undertake a study that will chart a development blueprint for the areas in and around the DMZ in preparation for the eventual unification of the ROK and the DPRK. This is a major break from the government's erstwhile policy of restricting the development of the frontline areas, where hundreds of thousands of soldiers face each other across the DMZ. The commissioned study is to take a look at a dozen counties in and near the DMZ from the perspective of development, and will analyze the experience of the German unification, in order to come up with a grand master plan. "Based on the results, we will carve out areas for ecological protection and those for possible development," said an official. The DMZ area is one of the last remaining areas where the environment and wildlife are preserved, owing to its treatment as a "no-man's land" between the two hostile countries. (Korea Herald, "GOV'T TO DEVELOP FRONTLINE AREAS BORDERING NORTH KOREA," 03/14/97)

3. ROK Calls to Strengthen Air Force

Speaking at the 45th Korea Air Force Academy graduation, ROK President Kim Young-sam yesterday emphasized maintaining air power supremacy to deter possible DPRK provocations. Noting that the DPRK is facing a crisis of collapse of its regime as evidenced by its severe economic difficulties and by the defections of some of its leaders, Kim cautioned that the DPRK may commit military provocations as it still clings to the anachronistic plan of communizing the ROK. ("Korea Times, "KIM CALLS FOR AIR POWER SUPREMACY TO DETER NK PROVOCATION," 03/14/97)

4. ROK and DPRK Agree on Air Routes

The ROK Ministry of Construction and Transportation announced yesterday that both the ROK and the DPRK are likely to reach an agreement on their respective flight information regions (FIR) at a meeting of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to be held in Bangkok on March 26. Accordingly, the ROK's civilian airplanes could fly to eastern Russia including Vladivostok as well as North America over the DPRK's FIR within the year, at the earliest. When the new air routes are established, the direct flight time between Seoul and New York could be shortened by about 30 minutes from the current 13 hours and 25 minutes and the 3-hour flight from Seoul to Vladivostok by about 40 minutes. ("Joong Ang Ilbo, "BOTH KOREAS LIKELY TO AGREE TO CIVILIAN AIR

ROUTES OVER THE NORTH," 03/14/97)

5. DPRK Teaches Capitalism

The DPRK, one of the world's last Stalinist states, is to start classes in capitalism at Kim Il-sung University in September, the head of the UN Development Program (UNDP) in the PRC said Wednesday. "The UNDP in the DPRK will be financing new course material, training for professors and classes on better management and the operation of the market economy around the world," chief representative Arthur Holcombe said. "This is at the request of the North Koreans ... and we may bring in expertise from Harvard University," he told a media briefing. The proposed courses will build on an existing small-scale program entitled "Structure of Management Functions." Devastating floods, a systemic failure of its economy, and the death of its Great Leader Kim Il-sung in 1994 have forced the nation to start tentative reforms. Holcombe said Pyongyang had also requested training on the world's market economies for officials in the fledgling Rajin-Sonbong Free Trade Zone in the north of the country. (Korea Times, "PYONGYANG TO START CLASSES ON CAPITALISM IN SEPTEMBER," 03/14/97)

III. Japan Report

1. Japanese Nuclear Accident

The March 11 explosion at a PNC nuclear fuel reprocessing plant in Tokaimura occurred on the first floor of its low-level nuclear waste bituminization facility, according to Japan's Science and Technology Agency and the Power Reactor and Nuclear Fuel Development Corporation (PNC). PNC revealed that an alarm sounded five minutes after the explosion broke through steel shutters at two points on the first floor of the four-story facility. PNC said that it was the largest radiation escape in PNC's operating history, but that the explosion did not result in a major leak. Although the cause of the explosion has not been determined, the Science and Technology Agency suspects that the explosion occurred in the first-floor asphalt packing room, where asphalt is mixed with low-level waste from the fuel reprocessing process. A previous small fire caused volatile asphalt gas to fill the room until the gas-to-oxygen ratio reached a level at which an explosion could easily occur. (The Asahi Shimbun, "EXPLOSION OCCURS AT PNC NUCLEAR FUEL REPROCESSING PLANT," 1, 3/12/97, The Yomiuri Shimbun, "30 WORKERS EXPOSED TO RADIATION, Evening Edition 1, 3/12/97, The Sankei Shimbun, "EXPLOSION OCCURS AT PNC NUCLEAR FUEL REPROCESSING PLANT," 1, 3/12/97, The Daily Yomiuri, "EXPLOSION OCCURS AT IBARAKI N-PLANT, 1, 3/12/97) [Ed. note: See also the US section of the March 12 Daily Report]

The Nikkei Shimbun ("RADIATION LEAK BEGAN SOON AFTER FIRE," 1, 3/14/97) reported that despite an earlier report by the PNC to the Science and Technology Agency at 10:30 am on March 11 that there is no cause for concern about environmental effects from the minor radiation leak, it became clear on March 13 that the leak actually began soon after the fire broke out on March 11. The Nikkei article pointed out that the minor radiation exposure to 34 employees might have been prevented if the PNC had noticed the leak earlier.

2. Japan-US Defense Relations

The Asahi Shimbun ("US SAYS MILITARY REDUCTION DIFFICULT IN EAST ASIA," Washington, 2, 3/4/97) reported that during Japan-US working level talks on defense held in Washington on March 3, the US said it is inappropriate to propose any change in military strength. Citing the increasing uncertainty in East Asia, the statement suggests that the US recognizes the difficulty in reducing the approximately 100 thousand US military personnel presently in the region. The report added that the US side expressed the same view with regard to the Quadrennial Defense Review to be

concluded in May.

The Nikkei Shimbun ("JAPAN-US SECURITY TALKS EXPOSES GAP BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES," Washington, 2, 3/7/97) reported that during high level Japan-US security talks on March 3 the US expressed its frustration over Japan's inflexibility on the Okinawa issue and its reluctance to get past the firing of depleted uranium bullets by the US. According to the report, the US side called for Japan's increased recognition of the sensitive situation in the Korean Peninsula, stressed the need for review of the Guideline for Japan-US Defense Cooperation, and called for progress on the Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) initiative. The report also quoted a US defense source at the talks as pointing out that the retirement of former US Defense Secretary William Perry, who put great emphasis on Japan-US security relations, made pro-Japan defense officials less influential in the second Clinton Administration.

3. DPRK-Taiwan Relations

The Sankei Shimbun ("DPRK AND TAIWAN START NEGOTIATIONS ON MUTUAL REPRESENTATIVE OFFICES, Taipei, 4, 3/5/97) reported that Yang Chu Fang, head of the Taipei office of a DPRK state-owned travel agency, told the Sankei Shimbun on March 6 that the DPRK and Taiwan have started negotiations on exchanging representative offices and that the offices will be launched within this year at earliest. Yang also said that he demanded the opening of a Pyongyang-Taipei civil aviation route last August and that the demand is still pending because Taiwan has been carefully waiting for the DPRK-Taiwan negotiations to start officially. In addition the Sankei article said that according to a Taiwanese daily on March 4, the DPRK has sent three officials to Taiwan for talks with the Taiwan Power Company concerning a nuclear waste processing program.

4. DPRK Food Situation

An official at the Japanese Office of the US World Food Program (WFP), Kazuaki Sato, told the Yomiuri Shimbun ("DPRK FOOD SITUATION IS GETTING WORSE," 4, 3/12/97) during an interview that per capita daily food allocation in the DPRK is reportedly 100 to 150 grams, which is only one sixth of what usually is allocated to refugees. He said that the DPRK's annual minimum demand for grain is approximately 5.4 million tons, but that this year's amount will be 2.6 million tons less than that. He also cited the WFP's latest report on the DPRK food situation as saying that some people even gather edible weeds and roots and that some children are starved to the point of inattention to their surroundings. Sato also said that the latest appeal aims to feed 1.73 million DPRK people with approximately 100 thousand tons of food (worth 41.6 million dollars).

5. Japan-DPRK Relations

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("JAPAN MAY POSTPONE FOOD AID AND KEDO CONTRIBUTION," 3, 3/14/97) reported that Japanese remarks regarding several suspected abductions by the DPRK at the Japan-US-ROK talks made the US participants concerned that Japan may delay its food aid to the DPRK. The report pointed out that recent news of the DPRK's suspected abduction of a Japanese high school girl made Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) reluctant about food aid to the DPRK. The report quoted LDP Secretary General Koichi Kato as saying that the LDP is carefully watching the situation. The report also quoted a foreign ministry official as saying that Japan's food aid to the DPRK and Japan's contribution to the Korean Peninsula Energy Development will be decided by how the DPRK responds to the four-party talks.

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