NAPSNet Daily Report 15 January, 1997

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report 15 January, 1997", NAPSNet Daily Report, January 15, 1997, https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-15-january-1997/

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1. ROK Attacks DPRK on Accepting Taiwan Nuclear Waste
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earlier in the day for talks prior to a January 25-26 summit occasioned the protest. Riot police were deployed in front of the main gate to prevent anyone from entering the compound. The protesters, members of the Korea Council for Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery, also delivered a protest letter to the embassy. The protesters were among many in the ROK

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3. Taiwan Receives US Arms

The Associated Press ("TAIWAN SAID TO GET U.S. ARMS," Taipei, 01/15/97) reported that Taiwan's United Evening News said that on Wednesday US Patriot missile batteries intended to form the backbone of a planned defense against PRC missile attacks arrived in Taiwan. Six mobile missile launchers were off-loaded at the northern port of Keelung and stored pending deployment in the outskirts of the capital, Taipei, the report said. The Taiwan military spokesman's office declined to comment on the report. Taiwan placed orders in 1993 for 200 PAC-2 missiles, an upgraded version of the Patriots used by US forces in the 1991 Gulf War.

4. ROK Strikes

Kevin Sullivan wrote in the Washington Post ("LABOR TUMULT POSES DILEMMA FOR S. KOREAN LEADER," 01/14/97, A10) that the nationwide strikes in protest of a new ROK labor law not only have cost the ROK economy some US$2.3 billion thus far, but also have presented President Kim Young-sam with an enormous political headache heading into a presidential election year. Sullivan wrote, "The strikes represent an important moment in South Korea's young democracy. They pit the government's desire to shed labor laws that guided the nation through decades of growth under military rulers who controlled industry, against workers' desires for more political and economic power in a free society." Sullivan noted that the strikers have had "surprising success" in garnering public support, signified by the government's unwillingness to follow through on arrest warrants for union leaders now in sanctuary in a Seoul cathedral, and by its offer to debate union leaders on television, which was rejected. The red-brick Myongdong Cathedral, now union leaders' headquarters, is rich in symbolism, having for decades been a refuge for democracy advocates that even past heavy-handed military governments refused to intrude. Many political analysts say the intensity and duration of the strikes surprised the Kim administration, and that public support for the strikes leaves Kim in a delicate position: backing down could present a politically suicidal appearance of weakness, while cracking down risks a bloody confrontation could alienate voters and undermine the ROK's emerging democracy. Yet, as images of confrontations between strikers and police are broadcast around the world, political pressure mounts for Kim to find a solution, Sullivan wrote.

The Associated Press (Ju-yeon Kim, "S. KOREA PROTESTS HEATING UP," Seoul, 01/15/97) and Reuters ("SOUTH KOREAN STRIKERS BATTLE POLICE," Seoul, 01/15/97) reported that in Seoul on Wednesday, fighting broke out between some 40,000 workers and students rallying in protest of the

new labor law, and 12,000 riot police attempting to contain them. Protesters wielding iron bars ripped up sidewalks and hurled chunks of the pavement at police, who responded with volleys of tear gas. Confrontations took place in various parts of the city, turning much of the city center into a battleground and bringing traffic to a standstill. The forceful police response to the protests came as the government signaled it would soon order police raids on the Seoul cathedral and other sites where union leaders are taking shelter. "If the workers do not stop their illegal strikes immediately, the government will act in a firm and resolute way to protect national security," senior prosecutor Choi Byong-kuk said. "North Korea is agitating workers to topple the government," Choi added. "If the unrest drags on, it will give North Korea an opportunity for revolutionary struggle." Suggesting that the union leaders have ties with the DPRK is a move frequently used by past governments to signal and justify harsh measures against political opponents. Meanwhile, the final day of the planned general strike largely fizzled amid growing evidence that the hearts of rank-and-file union members are not in the fight against the new labor law. The most dramatic indication came when Hyundai workers in the southeast city of Ulsan ran a gauntlet of unionists to keep open the ROK's largest dockyard.

5. ROK Strikes Threaten ROK OECD Status

Reuters ("FOREIGN UNIONISTS COMPLAIN OF KOREA HARASSMENT," Seoul, 01/15/97) reported that international labor leaders visiting the ROK to show solidarity with strikers on Wednesday accused the ROK government of intimidation after they were visited by immigration police. The four-man mission has irked the government with regular visits to Seoul's Myongdong Cathedral, where strike leaders are sheltering from arrest, and by appearing as star guests at several worker rallies. John Evans, head of a union advisory committee to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), said Seoul would pay a price for any repressive measures. "If there is a crackdown it would be an embarrassment for the Korean government in the OECD which won't go away for a long time," he said. OECD members have expressed concern that the ROK's new labor law violates worker rights to freedom of expression, and the OECD is holding a meeting on January 22 to review the situation.

II. Republic of Korea

1. DPRK Initiative Hinders Briefing Session Agreement

The ROK, DPRK, and US almost reached an agreement to hold a "joint briefing" on the four-party peace talks in New York on January 29, but a fresh DPRK overture prevented a complete agreement. According to ROK officials, working-level US and DPRK officials in New York on Saturday reached an agreement in principle on the date, venue, and other procedural matters for the joint briefing on the four-party talks. However, the DPRK then offered to hold the proposed separate high-level talks between the US and the DPRK in Washington. Both the joint briefing and high-level US-DPRK talks were agreed upon last December when US and DPRK officials met to discuss how to settle the submarine incursion incident. "If a joint briefing is held in New York and a high-level US-DPRK dialogue takes place in Washington, it means a worst-case scenario for Seoul," stated a ROK Foreign Ministry official. The Seoul government has reacted negatively to US-DPRK contact, especially in their respective capitals at Washington or Pyongyang, because it favors a phased improvement of US-DPRK ties in parallel with those between the ROK and the DPRK. The official also stated that all the sessions in New York, possibly including the one-day high-level talks, will last three or four days, and each delegation will be composed of five or six delegates. Following the senior-level talks between the US and the DPRK, the two countries are likely to hold additional bilateral meetings, separate from discussions on the four-party peace talks, in accordance with the Agreed Framework. As long as the DPRK abides by its obligations specified in the Geneva nuclear deal and moves favorably toward inter-Korean talks, Seoul will not oppose their contacts, the ROK official said.

However, the ROK is determined to put on the brakes if the DPRK acts irresponsibly in the future. (The Korea Times, "NK ERECTS HURDLE TO JOINT BRIEFING ON 4-PARTY TALKS," Seoul, 01/15/97)

2. KEDO-DPRK Negotiations

The Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) and the DPRK are to hold a follow up meeting on the light water reactor project agreements. The two parties have signed agreements on the service and the location of the project, and are expected to follow up by negotiating terms in the event either party does not abide by the initial agreements. The negotiations will include conditions for repatriation of project funds. (Hankyoreh Shinmun, Kang Tae-ho, "KEDO-DPRK TO FOLLOWUP NEGOTIATIONS ON LIGHT WATER REACTOR NEXT MONTH IN NEW YORK," Seoul, 01/15/97)

3. Taiwanese Protest Shipping Nuclear Waste to DPRK

The Taiwan Coalition for Environmental Protection protested against its government's plans to ship sixty thousand barrels of nuclear waste to the DPRK, saying that such action is irresponsible and neglects the welfare and the environment of the people in the DPRK. Reminding readers of the DPRK's attempt to destabilize the security in the East Asian region by secretly undertaking a nuclear weapons development program, the coalition also stated that it will, together with international environmental organizations, try to hinder the shipment of nuclear wastes to the DPRK. (Chosun Ilbo, "TAIWANESE ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP OPPOSES NUCLEAR WASTE EXPORT TO THE DPRK," Taipei, 01/15/97)

4. PRC Leader's Office Closed

Ming Pao daily of Hong Kong announced yesterday that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has officially announced the closing of ailing leader Deng Xiaoping's office. While the original source in Beijing stated that this does not imply a crisis in Deng's health, it does signify that any official orders claimed to be given by Deng are to be regarded with suspicion and reported to the Party Central Committee. (Chosun Ilbo, "THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY ANNOUNCES DENG'S OFFICE CLOSED," Seoul, 01/15/97)

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Produced by the Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development.

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