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I. United States

1. Venue Set for Four-Party Talks Briefing

United Press International ("N.KOREA AGREES TO DATE FOR BRIEFING," Washington, 01/16/97) reported that the US State Department said Thursday that the DPRK has agreed to have the formal US briefing on the four-party peace talks proposal take place on January 29. The location is yet to be determined. Progress toward reaching an agreement to convene the four-party talks, which would

involve the US, the PRC, the DPRK and the ROK, was interrupted by the DPRK submarine incursion into ROK territory last September. The DPRK agreed in principle to attend a briefing on the proposal as part of the resolution to the submarine incursion incident last month.

2. ROK Family Defects to DPRK

The Associated Press ("S. KOREA FAMILY FLEES TO NORTH," Seoul, 01/16/97) reported that the DPRK's official Korean Central News Agency announced Thursday that a ROK family of four has defected to the DPRK. Kuk Chol-jung, 36, who defected with his wife and their two children, aged seven and three, was quoted as saying, "I was convinced that the only way for my family is to come over to the North in which the popular masses form a great harmonious family." While an increasing number of DPRK citizens are fleeing to the ROK, defections in the opposite direction are rare. [Ed. note: Please see related item in the ROK section, below.]

3. ROK Official Apo

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3. ROK Official Apologizes On Labor Law

The Associated Press (Sang-hun Choe, "SKOREA APOLOGIZES FOR LABOR LAW," Seoul, 01/16/97) reported that the ROK's governing party chairman Lee Hong-koo on Thursday apologized for railroading the new labor bill through Parliament. "It is very regrettable that the revision of the law was not smooth ... for which I am very sorry," Lee said at a news conference. The law, which has sparked ongoing nationwide strikes and street violence, was passed in a seven-minute pre-dawn session on December 26 without opposition party members in attendance. The apology marked a step back from President Kim Young-sam's hard-line stand. But Lee ruled out the possibility of rewriting the law "for now," as strikers demand, saying only that the law could be changed later if and when problems arise in its implementation. Lee's concession failed to placate union leaders. "It is not even worth consideration at all. We are prepared for a prolonged struggle and we are confident that public opinion is on our side," said Kwon Young-gil, head of the illegal Korean Confederation of Trade Unions spearheading protest strikes. Meanwhile, some ten thousand workers

rallied Thursday at a downtown park in Seoul. A brief pushing match resulted when demonstrators tried to shove through a police barricade to reach the Roman Catholic Myongdong Cathedral, where the union leaders have set up headquarters. Police fired several volleys of tear gas to disperse the demonstrators, but the confrontation was milder than Wednesday's, when 150 union members and supporters were arrested.

4. ROK Strike Leaders Arrested

Reuters ("S.KOREA ARRESTS 3 MORE UNIONISTS IN CRACKDOWN," Seoul, 01/16/97) reported that ROK police on Thursday arrested three more strike leaders at the shipyard in the southwestern town of Yongam, on charges of beating up workers who refused to join the strikes. A fourth union leader was arrested on Tuesday night on similar charges, according to prosecution officials. Unionists interpreted the arrests as further indication of an impending crackdown, following the accusation by the country's top prosecutor that the DPRK may be fanning industrial unrest in an effort to topple the ROK government. However, top union leaders remained defiant. The president of the outlawed Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, Kwon Young-kil, told reporters at Seoul's Myongdong Cathedral, where he and six other confederation leaders are sheltering from arrest, "The confederation could prolong the current strikes for more than two months."

5. Outgoing US Secretary of State on Korean Situation

US Secretary of State Warren Christopher, soon to leave office, said in a television interview shown on Thursday ("CHRISTOPHER INTERVIEW ON NBC-TV "TODAY" SHOW," USIA Transcript, 01/16/97) that the US is "safer now" than when he took office four years ago, but noted that "there are a number of worry spots left in the world, of course." Christopher mentioned the Middle East as one such area, and then added, "I think we've always been concerned about the threat from North Korea." Asked about the prospects of Korean unification, Christopher said, "I see that as certainly being the goal of the United States and South Korea over time. I think we've frozen the nuclear program in North Korea, which has been a major step forward." Christopher also said that as Secretary of State, his "biggest lesson" was the importance of US leadership in the world.

6. ROK To Rescue Bull

United Press International (Kyong-Hya Suk, "S.KOREA TO SAVE BULL STRANDED IN DMZ," Seoul, 01/16/97) reported that the United Nations Command along the Demilitarized Zone between the two Korean states will send a contingent of ROK Marines to an island in the DMZ to rescue an ox. UN Command spokesman Jim Coles said, "We notified the North Koreans during a joint duty officer meeting today that we will be conducting the operation tomorrow so that they would not be surprised." Cole said going to the island does not require permission from the DPRK. Military officials say the animal was stranded by floods and will be rescued in part because there could be anti-personnel mines in the area. The plight of the animal gained national media coverage in the ROK after local officials sought ROK government permission to send food to the island, as part of a plan through which they also hoped to gain DPRK cooperation to supply the bull with a mate. However, that plan was dropped, in part because environmentalists argued that introducing foreign animals would destroy the island's natural habitat and endanger rare birds. [Ed. note: For an earlier related item please see "Bull Requires DPRK-ROK Cooperation" in the US section of the January 9 Daily Report.]

II. Republic of Korea

1. Kim Jong-il's Accession

The DPRK has reportedly decided to inaugurate its de-facto leader Kim Jong-il as the general secretary of the Korea Workers' Party in April. A visit by Kim Jong-il to the PRC in June is also being pursued, a diplomatic source in Seoul said yesterday. The source stated, "the DPRK appears to have placed top priority on improving ties with the US in order to maintain the current regime as well as to break out of the current state of isolation from the international community. To this end, DPRK authorities apparently decided that transfer of power to Kim Jong-il is inevitable." The source also reported that Kim Jong-il will visit the PRC in June after assuming the position of party general secretary. The DPRK government will be reshuffled before the three-year mourning period for the late Great Leader Kim Il- sung ends on July 8. The DPRK presidency will be filled after June as well. (Joong-ang Ilbo, "KIM JONG-IL TO ASSUME POSITION OF PARTY GENERAL SECRETARY IN APRIL," Seoul, 01/16/97)

2. ROK Strikes Raise Class Issues

Choi Byong-kuk, public security director at the Prosecutor- General's Office, said yesterday that prosecutions will proceed unless the Minju Nochong (Democratic Federation of Trade Unions) leadership and other strike leaders immediately stop illegal strikes. He said that the general strike has brought an enormous difficulty to the national economy and the people, and has now taken on the character of a class struggle. He said that leaflets were found at the Myongdong Cathedral (where the strike leaders are now holed up) that called for the overthrow of the capitalist government by workers, to be replaced by a workers government. Also, the DPRK lately has begun using Pyongyang Radio to call on ROK workers to overthrow the civilian government in Seoul, Choi added. (KPS, "STRIKE IS DEGENERATING INTO CLASS STRUGGLE," Seoul, 01/16/97)

3. ROK Family Defects to DPRK

The DPRK Central Broadcasting System Tuesday reported the defection of a four-member ROK family to the DPRK. Kuk Chol- jung, his wife, Yu Kyong-ok, 33, and his two children Jin-su and Su-jong, all appeared on a DPRK radio program, at which time Kuk identified himself as a former employee at Taekook Electronics Co. in Seoul. Kuk said he decided to come to the DPRK because of the vicious cycle of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer in the ROK. ROK authorities acknowledged the defection, but did not comment either on Kuk's profile or on details of the family's flight, such as the time and manner that the family entered the DPRK. (The Korea Herald, "NORTH REPORTS DEFECTION OF ROKN FAMILY," Seoul, 01/16/97) [Ed. note: Please see related item in the US section, above.]

4. PRC-Russia Relations

Russian Defense Minister Igor Rodyonov reportedly said in a letter to military officers that Russia is seeking a strategic partnership with the PRC. Minister Rodyonov's letter was sent to correct misunderstandings on "China's threat" among many officers. The letter said that most border region disarmament negotiations are being concluded positively, and that after the borders are legally demarcated, obstacles to the improvement of Russia-PRC bilateral relations will be eliminated. (Hankyoreh Shinmun, "RUSSIA SEEKS PARTNERSHIP WITH THE PRC," Moscow, 01/16/97)

5. US View of PRC-Russia Relations

The US acknowledges that the PRC has become a major buyer of Russian weapons technology, but sees no sign of a developing PRC- Russian alliance that could threaten the US. "The Russians are exporting quite a bit of arms technology to the PRC," said Winston Lord, the assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, but added, "We don't think it has reached alarming proportions." (The Korea Times, "THE PRC BECOME MAJOR BUYER OF RUSSIAN WEAPONS

TECH," 01/16/97) [Ed. note: For further information on this item, please see "US View of PRC-Russia Relations" in the US section of the January 14 Daily Report.]

6. Russian Navy

The Russian navy announced yesterday that it had successfully test-fired a new submarine launched ballistic missile (SLBM) from a submarine in the Pacific Ocean. The announcement said that the RSM-50 missile hit its designated target on the Kamchatka peninsula in the Russian Far East. (Chosun Ilbo, "RUSSIA SUCCEEDS NEW SUBMARINE LAUNCHED BALLISTIC MISSILE (SLBM) TEST FIRE," Seoul, 01/16/97)

III. People's Republic of China

1. DPRK to Attend US-ROK Briefing

China Daily ("DPRK AGREES TO ATTEND US-S. KOREAN BRIEFING," Seoul, A11, 1/14/97) reported that the DPRK has agreed to attend a joint US-ROK briefing this month to pave the way for four-party talks to establish permanent peace on the Korean peninsula. "Agreement has been reached between the two sides (Pyongyang and Washington) to hold the briefing in New York on January 29," the Daily said, quoting an official of the ROK foreign ministry. According to the report, the official declined to give details, but the Yonhap news agency quoted government sources as saying the agreement came in talks in New York on January 13. Vice-ministerial level officials from the three sides reportedly will participate in the briefing. [Ed. note: As reported in the January 14 Daily Report, the US State Department has not yet confirmed that the date or venue for the briefing session have been set.]

2. ROK-Japan Relations

The ROK Foreign Ministry issued a statement on January 12 expressing deep regrets that Japan, without the ROK government's approval, used money from a private fund to compensate World War II "comfort women," People's Daily ("ROK FOREIGN MINISTRY SUMMONS JAPANESE AMBASSADOR," Seoul, A6, 1/13/97) reported. The statement stressed that the historical issue must be resolved by the governments directly. According to People's Daily, on January 11, seven ROK women who were used as sex-slaves by the Japanese army during WWII each received 2 million yen and a letter of apology from Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto. For this issue, the Japanese Ambassador was summoned to ROK Foreign Ministry. The incident took place just before the Japanese Foreign Minister's visit to the ROK and ROK President Kim Young-sam's visit to Japan, and may become a new focus of ROK-Japanese diplomatic friction. [Ed. note: Please see related items in preceding Daily Reports]

3. DPRK-Japan Relations

Reacting to Japan's setting of prerequisites for the establishment of DPRK-Japanese diplomatic relations, a DPRK Foreign Ministry spokesman stressed on January 10 that if Japan did not expose and criticize its past, normalization would be impossible [Jie Fang Daily ("JAPAN URGED TO CORRECTLY REALIZE ITS PAST," Pyongyang, A4, 1/12/97)]. The spokesman called Japan insincere in its stated intent to improve DPRK-Japan relations, and called on the Japanese side to correctly understand the situation and return to the conference table as soon as possible. The Daily also reported publication of a commentary by Rodong Shinmun on January 11 that criticized recent remarks by the Japanese Prime Minister as implying that Japan intends to act aggressively toward other countries and aims to dominate the world. The commentary warned Japanese authorities not to forget historical lessons.

4. PRC-US Relations

People's Daily ("US IMPORT CUTS TO BE DELAYED," Beijing, A4, 1/10/97) reported that the PRC Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation (Moftec) announced on January 9 that the PRC will postpone a decision to cut certain US imports because of progress in PRC-US textile talks. US and PRC official delegations decided to start a fourth round of textile negotiations in Beijing on January 27. Because during the third round of talks in December the US delegation said that its customs agency was reexamining its decision to penalize the PRC for allegedly exporting Chinese-made textiles through a third country, and that it would present the results of this reexamination in the next round of talks, the PRC decided to postpone its deadline for suspension of imports until the end of January.

Wen Hui Daily ("SMUGGLER PUNISHED," Shanghai, A2, 1/14/97) reported that an American was sentenced to a 10-year jail term, and was fined 500,000 yuan (about US\$60,000) on January 13 for smuggling waste garbage into the PRC from the US. William Ping Chen was given the sentence by the Shanghai No 1 Intermediary People's Court in the first ruling, and was also ordered to be deported. Chen, 56, shipped a total of 238 tons of domestic garbage and medical waste in 16 containers from the US into Shanghai between July and December of 1995.

An investigation team from the US arrived in Guilin on January 13 to look into the cause of the crash of a WWII US bomber, China Daily ("CAUSE OF WWII CRASH STUDIED," A2) reported on January 14. The team of eight members is led by Alan Liotta, deputy director of the POW/MIA Office of the US Defense Department, the report said. They headed for the crash site on January 14 for mail detail. A ceremony to hand over the crew's remains will be held in Beijing on January 17. According to the report, the crashed bomber was discovered last October by two farmers collecting medicinal herbs on Mao'er Mountain, believed to be the highest peak in the southern PRC. Liotta expressed sincere appreciation and gratitude to the PRC on behalf of the US government, after reviewing some of the wreckage brought down from the valley and the remains of the crew, the report said. This is the second time the POW/MIA Office has come to the PRC to bring back the remains of missing soldiers since the end of the WWII, said Liotta. The first occurred in 1993 after a plane crash was reported in Tibet.

People's Daily ("JIANG ZEMIN: DEVELOPING HEALTHY AND STABLE SINO- US RELATIONS ON THE BASIS OF THREE JOINT COMMUNIQUE," Beijing, A1, 1/15/97) reported that PRC President Jiang Zemin on January met with William Roth, chairman of the Finance Committee of the US Senate, and then with a US Congressional delegation headed by Representative Jim Kolbe. During his meeting with Senator Roth, President Jiang said that developing economic and trade cooperation between the PRC and the US is conducive to establishing an open and healthy international economic environment and to promoting the prosperity of regional and global economies. Jiang emphasized that the Taiwan issue is always the most important and sensitive issue in PRC-US relations. When meeting with the US Congressional delegation headed by Kolbe, Jiang reiterated the significance of the development of PRC-US relationship. Jiang said that the US Congress is very important in the formulation of US domestic and foreign policies, and that he hopes the congressmen continue to use their positive influence to help Congress to play a constructive role in the development of PRC-US relations.

5. PRC Veto of Guatemala Resolution

On January 12-13, the PRC's main newspapers published commentaries supporting the government's veto of the UN draft resolution on peacekeeping in Guatemala. People's Daily ("VETO JUSTIFIED," A3, 1/12/97) said that the PRC, as a permanent member of UN Security Council, has always been very prudent in its use of the veto. The Guatemalan government should bear full responsibility for

what has happened, it said, for it is the Guatemalan government that hurt the feelings of the Chinese people and tore down the basis for cooperation between the two countries in the UN. The PRC's action in the UN is not only reasonable but also restrained, the commentary said. The PRC may reconsider the UN draft resolution if the Guatemalan government indeed treasures its peace process and makes sincere moves toward removing the obstacles, it quoted PRC Ambassador to the UN Qin Huasun as saying. People's Liberation Army Daily ("ONE WHO LIFTS A ROCK WILL DROP IT ON HIS OWN TOES," A5, 1/13/97) emphasized that it is the Guatemalan government that forced the PRC to exercise its veto. Now, the Guatemalan government is eating its own bitter fruit, the commentary concluded.

6. PRC Nuclear Plant Loan Contracts Signed

China Daily ("CONTRACTS INKED FOR NUCLEAR POWER PLANT," A5, 1/14/97) reported that loan agreements totaling US\$1.84 billion were signed in Beijing on January 13 to fund a nuclear power plant in Zhejiang Province. The agreements were signed between the State Development Bank (SDB), the Export Development Company of Canada (EDC), and the US Export-Import Bank (Eximbank). The money will be used to import equipment for the construction of the third phase of the Qinshan nuclear power plant, the report said. Under the agreements, the loans will be repaid in 15 years with a grace period of seven years. The loans carry an interest rate of 6.54 per cent, lower than that for commercial loans on the current world market. Besides the lower interest rate, SDB's efforts also received other favorable conditions for credit, offered by the EDC and Eximbank for the first time. An SDB official said its efforts saved nearly US\$200 million in investments for the nation.

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