

# NAPSNet Daily Report 17 December, 1999

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## I. United States

### 1. DPRK-Japan Normalization Talks

Agence France Presse ("ABDUCTIONS OVERSHADOW JAPAN-NORTH KOREA TALKS," Tokyo, 12/17/99) reported that analysts see the DPRK-Japan talks scheduled for December 19 in Beijing as a DPRK attempt to get food aid as well as financial compensation for Japan's colonial rule of the Korean peninsula. However, Pyon Jin-Il, the publisher of the Tokyo newsletter Korea Report, said, "food aid as well as the suspicions about the abductions [of Japanese citizens] will surface anew as bones of contention." Pyon said that when Japan touched on the kidnapping cases in earlier DPRK-Japan talks, the DPRK counterattacked by denouncing the Japanese military's use of sexual slaves, or "comfort women," in World War II. The DPRK has only agreed to deal with the abductions as cases involving "missing people," but Pyon said that the DPRK Red Cross might promise to investigate the cases but come back saying "missing people do not exist." The DPRK Workers Party newspaper Rodong Sinmun warned that "dishonest forces" in Japan focus on the alleged abductions to "make the situation complicated. The anti-DPRK diatribe launched by dishonest forces of Japan after raising again the issue of 'suspected abduction of Japanese' is intended to throw a wet blanket on the efforts to improve the DPRK-Japan relations." Chief Cabinet Secretary Mikio Aoki told a news conference on December 16, however, that the question of abductions should not be brushed aside and the assertion from the Japanese side should be taken up in a proper manner."

## **2. DPRK-US Relations**

The International Herald Tribune carried an opinion article by Douglas H. Paal, president of the Asia Pacific Policy Center in Washington ("AN EASING OF KOREAN TENSION FOR NOW, BUT IT MAY NOT LAST," Washington, 12/17/99) which said that tensions on the Korean Peninsula appear to be significantly lower than a year ago. The author argued, "It may be in Pyongyang's interest to get as much from the outgoing Democratic administration as possible. Given its outsized preoccupation with itself, it may see cooperation with Washington as helping the Democrats' chances. But if the North sees a Democratic victory as likely, then it can afford to wait. Or Pyongyang's strategy may in fact be much simpler - to cooperate for only as much food as it absolutely needs." He added, however, that the DPRK may be biding time until it needs more aid from the US, the ROK, and Japan. He concluded, "If this is the case, then it is reasonable to expect Pyongyang to repeat its past behavior by ending the current lull with tensions and new moves intended to rebuild its leverage on Washington, Seoul and Tokyo in advance of further talks." [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for December 17, 1999.]

## **3. ROK Rocket Launch**

The Strait Times ("SOUTH KOREAN LAUNCH SPARKS ARMS-RACE FEARS," Seoul, 12/17/99) reported that Lee Sang-mok, chief of the Strategic Technology Development Division at the ROK Science and Technology Ministry, said on December 16 that the ROK plans to launch an independent space satellite with a domestically-built rocket into a low-altitude orbit by 2005. Analysts said that there is international concern that the plan will fuel an arms race in Northeast Asia. According to a ministry draft plan, the ROK will begin building an ROK launch site in 2001 and have it ready for a test run by 2004. The project cost is estimated at 130 billion won (US\$182 million).

## **4. ROK Defoliant Use**

BBC News ("KOREANS SUE OVER WAR CHEMICALS," 12/16/99) reported that some 17,000 ROK veterans of the Vietnam War are suing the two US chemical manufacturers Monsanto and Dow Chemical for more than US\$4 billion, claiming that defoliants such as Agent Orange produced by the firms damaged their health. Monsanto and Dow Chemical disclaimed responsibility for any harm done. Attorney Kwang Soo-yong told the court, "there have been no court cases to substantiate the noxiousness of defoliants produced by the firms."

## **5. PRC-Japan Relations**

The South China Morning Post (Glenn Schloss, "BEIJING TREADS SOFTLY OVER INSISTENCE ON WAR APOLOGY," Tokyo, 12/17/99) reported that according to Japanese diplomats and analysts, PRC leaders have begun moderating their criticism of Japan's aggression during the 1930s and World War II, helping to improve PRC-Japan relations. Japanese Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Ichita Yamamoto said he believed the change in the PRC attitude toward what the Japanese call "historical issues" will allow relations to improve. Yamamoto said, "we are going to continue this effort to overcome some of the hostilities between the two countries and consolidate our relations towards the millennium and the 21st century." Politburo Standing Committee member Li Ruihuan concluded a visit to Japan on December 16 with little reference to past events. Toshiro Ozawa, acting director of the Foreign Ministry-related Japan Institute of International Affairs, believes more exchanges are needed between the young people of the two countries, but surveys have shown that more young Japanese are viewing the PRC in a negative rather than positive light. Ozawa said, "there has been a

shift in opinions and I think this is a worrying trend. There is a need for both countries to strengthen youth exchange to enhance mutual understanding."

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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