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2a. Hwang Defection: DPRK Position Shifts

Reuters ("N.KOREA WOULD FIRE DEFECTOR, S.KOREA ON ALERT," Beijing, 2/17/97) and the Associated Press ("N. KOREA MAY OK HWANG DEFECTION," Beijing, 2/17/97) reported that the DPRK said Monday it would fire leading ideologue Hwang Jang-yop if, as reported, he is seeking asylum in the ROK embassy in Beijing. The statement was the first indication that the DPRK was prepared to accept the apparent defection. However, the DPRK's Foreign Ministry, commenting on the highest level defection ever from the DPRK, again threatened retaliation if it proves that Hwang has been kidnapped, as the DPRK initially charged. The DPRK's official KCNA news agency, monitored in Tokyo, quoted the Foreign Ministry as saying: "Our stand is simple and clear. If he was kidnapped, we cannot tolerate it and we will take decisive countermeasures. If he sought asylum, it means that he is a renegade and he is dismissed." Kang Ho-yang, spokesman for ROK's Unification Ministry, said the comment indicated that the DPRK was abandoning its earlier position in which it had rejected Hwang's defection as "inconceivable and impossible." The DPRK statement added that the DPRK had asked Beijing to investigate what it called the disappearance of Hwang, who took refuge in the ROK's mission in Beijing six days ago. The DPRK ambassador to the PRC was believed to have met officials at the PRC Foreign Ministry on Monday. Meanwhile, ROK diplomats and PRC police guarding the mission brought in extra blankets and mattresses in a sign they expected a lengthy stand-off. However, dozens of DPRK officials who had been keeping a round-the-clock vigil outside the police lines disappeared on Monday, and PRC police also appeared visibly more relaxed.

2b. Hwang Defection: Meeting with CIA Denied

Reuters ("SEOUL SEEKS TALKS WITH N.KOREA," Seoul, 2/17/97) reported that the ROK Foreign Ministry on Monday denied reports that apparent defector Hwang Jang-yop, currently in the ROK embassy in Beijing, had met a US intelligence official and revealed plans by other DPRK officials to flee. "No U.S. official has met Hwang Jang-yop," ministry spokesman Lee Kyu-hyung said. "The news reports are not true at all," Lee said.

Reuters ("RADIO: MORE OFFICIALS SEEK TO FLEE NORTH KOREA," Seoul, 2/17/97) earlier reported that the Korea Broadcasting System and local newspapers said Hwang Jang-yop told an official from the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) that six to seven officials of the DPRK's ruling Workers' Party wanted to seek political asylum. The media reports said Hwang had a 35-minute meeting with the US official at the consular section of the ROK office hours after he arrived there to seek asylum in ROK. The Chosun Ilbo newspaper, quoting diplomatic sources in Beijing, reported Hwang told the US official that he had made up his mind to seek asylum after consulting with "a number of people." "Apart from me, there are other people who have decided to defect," Chosun Ilbo quoted Hwang as saying. Hwang told the official that he did not mind going to the US briefly before he could settle in the ROK, according to the newspaper.

2c. Hwang Defection: Diplomatic Statements

Reuters ("U.S. CLOSELY MONITORS N.KOREA DEFECTOR CASE," Washington, 2/17/97) reported that US ambassador to the UN Bill Richardson on Sunday commented on the Korean crisis in an interview on ABC television's "This Week" program. "This is an incident that is serious," Richardson said. "This is an incident that we're watching very closely." He said US intelligence analysts doubted the DPRK was on the verge of collapse, but they were closely monitoring developments. "Our intelligence people claim that there is not a threat of an imminent collapse, but there's a tense situation there," Richardson said. "We have to watch it very closely. We're concerned about this defector situation. We urge North Korea to live up to the agreement that they made on the submarine incident, when they apologized, and part of that agreement with South Korea was, number one, that they not engage in provocative actions." Richardson also said that on a visit to Pyongyang he met Hwang Jang-yop, the DPRK ideologue currently in ROK embassy in Beijing seeking asylum in the ROK. "I believe I did meet him on my first trip there," he said. "He was speaker of the house. I remember him being very hard line. I know he's being described as a writer, an intellectual. He didn't strike me as that. He struck me more as a sort of a party leader."

Reuters ("S.KOREA ON ALERT FOR N.KOREA ATTACKS," Seoul, 2/17/97) reported that US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, in Germany on her current world tour, voiced US concern over the crisis situation on the Korean peninsula. "Obviously, we are concerned about events on the Korean peninsula and they just underline the importance of trying to establish a dialogue between North and South Korea," Albright said.

Reuters ("S.KOREA ON ALERT FOR N.KOREA ATTACKS," Seoul, 2/17/97) reported that ROK Foreign Minister Yoo Chong-ha said Hwang's apparent defection only add to difficulties caused by deep problems in the DPRK. "I believe the North Korean regime's crisis will deepen as time passes because there's no likelihood of improvement in its economic hardship and food shortages, and signs of laxity in its social order," Yoo told a meeting of ROK diplomats. Yoo said the ROK would step up efforts to hold peace talks with the DPRK, along with the US and the PRC. "To manage the fluid situation on the Korean peninsula ... and maintain peace, we should achieve four-nation peace talks," he said.

2d. Hwang Defection: Washington Post Editorial

The Washington Post published an editorial ("THE KOREAN DEFECTOR," 2/16/97, C06) addressing

the "deeper question" of whether the current crisis over Hwang Jang-yop's apparent defection "may precipitate some sort of major political break in the famine-ridden Stalinist pariah state in the North." The editorial described Hwang as "the rare North Korean not only known but, within limits, passably well regarded outside his country." The editorial argued that "North Korea's record of violence and treachery make it only prudent for the United States to take an attitude of vigilance and see what develops behind the iron curtain around Pyongyang." However, the editorial then continued: "At the same time, this high-level defection may open up to South Korea and the United States a novel opportunity to sharpen their reading of North Korea and its leadership. Mr. Hwang could become, as some of his Western acquaintances suggest, not just a source but also a possible interlocutor at a moment when the American-sponsored effort to buy North Korea out of the nuclear-bomb business and to draw it into a community with its neighbors is in another crucial phase."

3. US, ROK Aid to DPRK Still On

Reuters ("U.S. PLANS $10 MILLION IN N. KOREA FOOD AID," Paris, 2/17/97) and the Associated Press ("AMERICAN FOOD AID TO BE RESUMED," Paris, 2/17/97) reported that US State Department Nicholas Burns said Monday that the US will resume food aid to the DPRK. Burns said the amount of food aid to be delivered through the UN World Food Program would be announced soon. US officials reportedly said the amount would be US$10 million, considerably more than expected and well above last year's donation of US$6.4 million. However, the aid, amounting to about 100,000 tons of commodities, still falls far short of needs judged by aid agencies to be over two million tons of commodities. The World Food Program last week formally issued an appeal for US$41.6 million in new food aid. US officials said that the ROK was expected to offer roughly an extra US$5 million in food aid. In fact, in Seoul a few hours earlier, the ROK said it too would send food aid as well as nuclear technicians to the DPRK despite recent tension. "Our policy is to send the (nuclear) survey team regardless of the tense situation," said Ban Ki-moon, President Kim Young-sam's national security adviser.

The Associated Press ("S. KOREA MAY SUSPEND NUKE TEAM," Seoul, 2/16/97) earlier reported that the ROK intended to suspend plans for food aid to the DPRK and would sending ROK technicians to the DPRK to begin work on the light-water nuclear plant construction project. "The safety of our personnel could be in jeopardy," Yonhap quoted the government official as saying. A 30-member ROK technical team had been scheduled to leave next Saturday to work on the reactors promised to the DPRK in the 1994 US-brokered agreement under which the DPRK froze its own nuclear program, suspected of developing weapons. The ROK originally had planned to send the nuclear survey team last October, but refused to proceed until the DPRK apologized for the September submarine incursion. Under pressure, the DPRK issued a "statement of regret" in December, clearing the way for the team's dispatch this year.

4. PRC Leader's Health

The Associated Press ("U.S. WATCHES DENG'S HEALTH," Washington, 2/17/97) reported that US administration officials said Monday they are following reports that PRC leader Deng Xiaoping is critically ill and PRC leaders have interrupted trips to return to Beijing. The officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said President Jiang Zemin and Premier Li Peng had reportedly returned to Beijing from provincial trips because of Deng's health. White House spokeswoman Mary Ellen Glynn said the administration had no independent information about the leader's health status. "We have no indications that the situation has changed," she said. A Hong Kong newspaper over the weekend reported that Deng, 92 and in declining health for some years, had suffered a brain hemorrhage and was in the intensive care unit of a military hospital in Beijing. Deng has not played an active role in PRC politics for most of this decade, but remains the patriarch of the Communist Party and no major changes in the Chinese leadership are likely as long as he is alive.

II. Republic of Korea

1. Past DPRK Defector Shot in Seoul

Suspected DPRK agents shot and critically wounded Lee Han-young, 36, at an apartment on the southern outskirts of Seoul Saturday night. Lee, who is a nephew of Sung Hye-rim, thought to be DPRK leader Kim Jong-il's first wife, defected to the ROK in 1982. Police said Lee was shot in the head and chest at around 9:50 p.m. and was in critical condition. Kim Choong-nam, chief of the Pundang Police Station in Songnam, said at least two DPRK agents were involved in the "premeditated assassination." Kim said police found at the scene two shells from a Belgian-made Browning pistol, which is a standard weapon for DPRK agents. Kim also noted that the DPRK had earlier threatened unspecified retaliation for what the DPRK says is the ROK's "kidnapping" of DPRK Workers' Party secretary Hwang Jang-yop, who has sought asylum in the ROK embassy in Beijing. The shooting happened as Lee was returning to the apartment of a friend, where he had been staying since last December. Lee last month divorced his wife, Kim Jong-un. The shooting was witnessed by Nam Sang-hwa, the wife of Lee's friend Kim Jang-hyon, who saw two strangers confronting Lee with a pistol through a door video-phone. Nam told police that when she reached Lee after the shooting, he raised two fingers and muttered "ganchop, ganchop," meaning DPRK spies, before passing out. Lee's friends said that in the wake of Hwang's defection Lee had expressed concern that he might be a target of DPRK terrorism. DPRK watchers in Seoul said the shooting was a warning to defectors that they were not safe in the South, to discourage more defection, and was also a warning to the ROK to stop luring DPRK defectors. Lee's own defection was disclosed only in February of last year, following the report that his aunt, the mother of Kim Jong-il's oldest son, was trying to defect to the West from her Moscow apartment along with his mother, Sung Hye-rang. Hwang has been quoted as saying to a businessman from Seoul that there are some 50,000 DPRK agents in the South, "with some deep in your side." (Korea Herald, "ATTACK SEEN AS RESPONSE TO RECENT DEFECTION," Lee Sung-yul, Seoul, 02/17/97)

ROK police and the military were put on high alert against possible DPRK terrorist acts following the shooting Saturday night Lee Han-young. ROK Prime Minister Lee Soo-sung presided over an emergency meeting of security-related ministers and top presidential aides yesterday to discuss what investigators believe is a terrorist act sponsored by the DPRK in response to the apparent defection of Hwang Jang-yop. Officials said Lee and the other top officials discussed ways to bolster national and public security against possible DPRK terrorist acts at home and abroad. An official said top officials fear the DPRK may attempt to escalate tension on the Korean Peninsula still further to impede the ROK's efforts to bring Hwang to Seoul, and did not rule out a possible demonstration of force by the DPRK and, in a worst case scenario, limited warfare. During the top security meeting, ROK Foreign Minister Yoo Chong-ha, having returned from an Asia-Europe Summit Meeting held in Singapore earlier in the day, reported discussions he had with his PRC and Japanese counterparts on Hwang's defection. The emergency meeting, which was held at the prime minister's residence, was initially to have been presided over by the deputy prime minister for unification and to have focused on diplomatic efforts to bring Hwang to Seoul as soon as possible. However, in the wake of Lee's shooting and the anticipated increase of tension on the peninsula, Prime Minister Lee took charge of the discussion. (Korea Herald, "NATION ON EMERGENCY STATUS; FOLLOWING SHOOTING OF DEFECTOR; A NEPHEW OF KIM JONG-IL'S FORMER WIFE, SUNG HYE-RIM," Seoul, 02/17/97)

Prosecutors investigating the shooting of Lee Han-young on Sunday decided that the crime must have been committed by DPRK agents in retaliation for the recent apparent defection of Hwang Jang-yop. Prosecutors said, "Based on the circumstances, the incident is judged to be a crime committed by DPRK spies." Prosecutors also said that the DPRK agents might have received help from ROK conspirators. After analyzing two empty cartridges discovered at the scene of crime,

prosecutors confirmed that the gun used to shoot Lee was a Belgium-made Browning model frequently used by DPRK agents. (Chosun Ilbo, "DEFECTIVE AND RELATIVE OF KIM JONG IL SHOT, IN CRITICAL CONDITION," 02/17/97)

The PRC government reportedly told the ROK government that it hopes that the defection of Hwang Jang-yop may be resolved peacefully. A ROK government official said yesterday, "China recently stated in diplomatic contacts with the ROK government that it hopes both Koreas can resolve Hwang's case through dialogue." (Chosun Ilbo, " CHINA HOPING BOTH KOREAS RESOLVE HWANG'S DEFECTION THROUGH DIALOGUE," 02/17/97)

2. ROK-Japan Relations

Yamashita Shintaro, Japan's ambassador to the ROK, said Japan will work in harmony with the ROK in normalizing relations with the DPRK. Calling the present relations between Tokyo and Pyongyang "anomalous," the ambassador said Tokyo will also deal with the matter in the context of peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. On that line, any economic aid to the DPRK will not precede normalization between the two countries, he said. He iterated the same policy on food aid to the DPRK, saying that 1995 and 1996 aid was from an "exceptional case of urgent and humanitarian" one. Yamashita also said that Japan will play a "significant role" in sharing the cost for construction of two light-water nuclear reactors in the DPRK as it realizes that the KEDO project under the Agreed Framework is the most realistic way to deal with the DPRK's nuclear weapons development. (Korea Herald, "JAPAN TO SEEK HARMONY WITH SEOUL OVER TIES WITH NORTH KOREA," Kim Ji-soo .02/17/97)

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. We invite you to reply to today's report, and we welcome commentary or papers for distribution to the network.

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