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I. United States

1. US-DPRK Talks

US Department of State Deputy Spokesman James B. Foley ("NEXT ROUND OF U.S.-NORTH KOREA TALKS SLATED FOR FEB. 27," USIA Text, Washington, 02/16/99) announced that the next round of US-DPRK discussions on the Kumchangri underground construction will be held in New York beginning February 27. Foley stated, "In these talks, as in previous rounds, the US will seek steps by the DPRK to remove fully our suspicions about the site, including by providing access to it. Ambassador Charles Kartman, US Special Envoy for the Korean Peace Talks, will lead the US delegation." [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for February 17.]

2. DPRK Missile Development

The Associated Press ("JAPAN: NKOREA COULD LAUNCH MISSILE," Tokyo, 02/16/99) reported that

Japan's semi-government television network NHK quoted unidentified Japanese defense sources as saying on Tuesday that the DPRK has the technology to launch a long-range ballistic missile capable of reaching parts of the US. The sources said that the DPRK has made significant progress in developing its Taepodong-2 liquid-fuel missiles. Japan's Kyodo News agency said that an unidentified agency official predicted that the DPRK would test-launch the missile within the year. Japanese Defense Agency spokesman Kazushi Tanaka said that the agency would not comment because of security reasons. Tanaka added, "We do not expect North Korea to conduct a test-firing of the missile anytime soon." [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for February 17.]

The Republican National Committee issued a Press Release ("NEW REPORT ILLUMINATES NEED FOR MISSILE DEFENSE SYSTEM TODAY," Washington, 02/16/99) which quoted Republican National Committee Chairman Jim Nicholson as saying that said the need for a national missile defense system is more urgent than ever before in the wake of the Japanese Defense Agency's report on the DPRK's missile capability. Nicholson stated, "Republicans have been pushing the Clinton/Gore Administration for years to provide this country with a system to defend against an incoming enemy missile. Today we have evidence that one more rogue nation now has the capability to strike our country, and the time for debate has closed. President Clinton has publicly vowed to get back to the people's business, and one great way for him to start would be to commit to protecting the people of this nation from a missile attack." He added, "The Clinton/Gore policy that has left our nation vulnerable to missile attack from rogue dictators and terrorists must end."

3. Kim Jong-il's Birthday

The Associated Press ("N. KOREAN LEADER TURNS 57," Seoul, 02/16/99) reported that the DPRK's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said that Kim Jong-il spent his 57th birthday on Tuesday visiting a women's antiaircraft gun battery and inspecting a training exercise by an army unit. KCNA added that DPRK citizens observed the day with sports events, cultural festivals, and other gala programs. ROK analysts said that Kim's activities reflect the importance of the military's role in the DPRK.

4. DPRK Famine

The Associated Press ("NORTH KOREAN POPULATION SHRINKS," Seoul, 02/17/99) reported that unnamed ROK intelligence officials on Wednesday cited a classified DPRK Public Security Ministry survey as showing that the DPRK's population has shrunk by as many as 3 million people in the past four years because of famine. They said that the survey confirms widespread Western reports that more than 500,000 DPRK citizens have died of hunger each year since 1995. The ROK National Intelligence Service did not say how it obtained the survey. ROK officials estimated the DPRK's population at 22 million, down from 24 million before 1994.

5. Alleged PRC Espionage

The Washington Post (Walter Pincus, "U.S. CRACKING DOWN ON CHINESE DESIGNS ON NUCLEAR DATA," 02/17/99, A07) reported that US intelligence analysts four years ago obtained a top-secret PRC nuclear weapons document from the late 1980s that showed that the PRC had gained access to US nuclear secrets. However, an unnamed former top US nuclear weapons lab official said that it is difficult to prove what may have been revealed to the Chinese on the basis of the document. He added, "this may have saved them one or two years," because they had "already done advanced

work in this area." Unnamed sources said that US experts concluded that the PRC may have learned through espionage how to miniaturize the shape of nuclear materials in the W-88 warhead, allowing more warheads to be carried farther distances. A Presidential Decision Directive, PDD-61, approved in February 1998, has ordered new measures at Los Alamos, Livermore, and Sandia National Laboratories to increase security. Energy Department security officials said that one outstanding issue is how to prevent security leaks via e-mails exchanged between US and Chinese scientists involved in joint programs, including arms control and nonproliferation efforts. The House select committee formed last summer to investigate the transfer of high technology to the PRC recommended reports at least every six months to Congress on actions taken "to respond to espionage by the People's Republic of China" and a "comprehensive damage assessment of the strategic implications of the security breaches that have taken place." [Ed. note: This article was one of the top stories in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for February 17.]

6. Spratly Islands Dispute

The Washington Times ("NEW CHINESE FACILITIES RISE AT MISCHIEF REEF," Manila, 02/17/99, 13) reported that Philippine Defense Secretary Orlando Mercado said Tuesday that the PRC has built what appears to be a helipad, radar facilities, and possible gun emplacements on Mischief Reef in the disputed Spratly Islands in the South China Sea. Navy chief Vice Admiral Eduardo Santos said that photographs taken by Philippine reconnaissance planes show one of the structures is four stories high and topped by "a pagoda." [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for February 17.]

II. Republic of Korea

1. ROK-DPRK Talks

Chosun Ilbo ("KIM TO PROPOSE RECONCILIATION WITH NK," 02/17/99) reported that ROK President Kim Dae- jung will hold a televised town meeting this coming Sunday to announce an "epoch-making" measure to improve ROK- DPRK relations this year. Meanwhile, the government plans to convene a standing committee meeting of the National Security Council on Thursday to discuss ways to achieve a meeting between high-ranking officials of the ROK and the DPRK. The ROK government has reportedly deemed that the DPRK government is amenable to have dialogue if its negotiations with the US to clear the suspected nuclear weapons facility in Kumchangri go smoothly. The ROK's decision about fertilizer aid to the DPRK would be another clear factor in the DPRK's willingness to hold talks. One high-ranking government official said Wednesday that the climate for dialogue is ripe, and the council will analyze the possibility of attaining direct official channels of communication to the DPRK.

2. Kim Jong-il's Birthday Celebration

Chosun Ilbo ("KIM JONG-IL CELEBRATES US$90 MILLION BIRTHDAY," 02/17/99) reported that Kim Jong-il celebrated his fifty-seventh birthday on Tuesday. It was the first since his accession to all top positions in the DPRK. He visited the winter training area of the 682 unit and the women's 911 Anti-Aircraft company. In Pyongyang, a mass inauguration of the children's pioneer corps was held to honor Kim following the previous evening's two separate mass evening meetings of students and Ministry of Defense employees. Various monument dedication ceremonies and a flower exhibition were also held to celebrate the country's leader. Delegates from communist parties in Italy,

Bangladesh, Cambodia, and various other pro-DPRK groups paid homage at Kim Il-sung's tomb. The ROK National Intelligence Service (NIS) estimated that US$90 million was spent on celebrations: US$45 million on presents and food, US$43.83 million in clothing and lodging of event participants, US$1.58 million to buy overseas gifts, and US$3 million in inviting foreign participation.

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

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