

# NAPSNet Daily Report 17 March, 1997

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## **I. United States**

### **1. Hwang Defection**

Reuters ("N. KOREAN DEFECTOR STILL IN BEIJING," Beijing, 3/17/97) reported that ROK officials said on Monday that DPRK defector Hwang Jang-yop could leave as soon as this week, but that a dispute with the PRC over his initial destination was stalling a final resolution. "It could be this week, it could be next week," ROK embassy spokesman Chang Moon-Ik said when asked when Hwang would leave Beijing. Hwang has been in the ROK consulate in Beijing since seeking asylum there February 12. According to unnamed officials in Seoul, Hwang is still expected to depart for a third country soon, once details have been arranged, and eventually to go to the ROK. One unnamed senior ROK foreign ministry official said, "Hwang Jang-yop will be able to leave China this week but his departure might not be today or tomorrow." Reports over the weekend said that the Philippines had already agreed to allow Hwang to stop in Manila on his way to the ROK. Three vans seen driving away from Seoul's consulate in Beijing early on Monday fueled speculation that Hwang already had been spirited out of compound. Security around the consulate was tight on Monday, including PRC police armed with assault rifles posted at approaches to the compound and backed by several

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### **I. United States**

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## **2. DPRK Ex-Prime Minister Reported Dead**

The Associated Press ("REPORT: N. KOREA EX-PREMIER DEAD," Seoul, 3/14/97) reported that the ROK's KBS television, quoting anonymous sources in Tokyo, reported Saturday that former DPRK Prime Minister Kang Song-san has died. Kang was replaced last month and was believed ill. Seoul's national daily Dong-A Ilbo, quoting government sources, said Kang died February 22, one day after DPRK Defense Minister Choe Kwang died of a heart attack. KBS television said that former deputy premier and economic technocrat Kim Tal-hyon would replace Kang. Kim is considered an advocate of foreign trade, a rare view in the isolated North, Seoul officials said. Last month, the DPRK disclosed that it had named its then deputy premier Hong Song-nam as acting premier to replace Kang. KBS reported that the DPRK had yet to announce Kang's death because of the ongoing crisis over the attempted defection of Hwang Jang Yop.

## **3. DPRK Famine Situation**

The Associated Press ("U.N. INSPECTS AREAS IN N. KOREA," Seoul, 3/17/97) reported that the DPRK's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said Monday that UN relief officials visited flood-stricken areas in the country over the weekend and urged a quick infusion of 100,000 tons of food aid. KCNA said that The UN team, headed by Catherine Bertini, the World Food Program's executive director, visited North Hwanghae Province on Sunday to assess the effect of two years of severe flooding. The World Food Program first appealed for the aid last month, warning that the DPRK could suffer a famine this spring without it. The UN officials also visited a nursery, a kindergarten, local homes and watched as workers reclaim farm land buried under rocks and mud, the report said.

## **4. Poll on US and Japanese Security Perceptions**

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("JAPAN-U.S. RELATIONS SEEN IMPROVED, CHINA SEEN MENACE: POLL," Tokyo, 3/17/97) reported that a poll conducted jointly by Japan's national newspaper Yomiuri Shimbun and the US Gallup Organization showed that both US and Japanese citizens see relations between their two countries as greatly improved. The survey, conducted in January and February and reported by the Yomiuri, indicated that on both sides, the number of those who viewed bilateral relations as poor was the lowest in the last 10 years of the survey, conducted almost annually since 1978. Those describing relations as good climbed to 46 percent for US respondents, up from 28 percent in 1995, and to 45.7 percent for Japanese, up from 22.8 percent. Asked which region or country would most likely pose a military threat to Japan, the DPRK topped the list among the Japanese respondents with 55 percent, while 39.1 percent named the PRC, up 22 percentage points from a 1994 survey. Of US respondents, 22.6 percent regarded the DPRK as a future threat to Japan. Regarding threats to US security, 40.6 percent of US respondents named the PRC, up 5 percentage points and second only to the 50 percent who named the Middle East.

## **5. US To Accept Nuclear Waste**

The San Francisco Examiner (Keay Davidson, "NUCLEAR SHIPMENT WORRIES WATCHDOGS," 3/16/97, C1) reported that the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), a California state government agency, is combating plans by the US Navy and US Department of Energy (DOE) to ship large quantities of highly radioactive nuclear fuel rods from overseas through the San Francisco Bay Area. The BCDC says the shipments violate environmental laws because of the danger posed by radioactive contamination in the event of an accident or terrorist attack. The Navy and DOE say that the shipments of "hot" nuclear rods from reactors in foreign countries, destined ultimately for a high-security storage site in Idaho, are necessary to insure the materials do not fall into the possession of terrorists or renegade governments. The BCDC, although a state agency, is authorized by the US Congress to monitor US government compliance with US federal environmental laws applicable in California. The report did not identify any countries from which the nuclear shipments would originate. [Ed. note: This report raises suspicions that nuclear fuel rods currently being canned in the DPRK may be shipped to the US through the San Francisco Bay Area.]

## **II. Republic of Korea**

### **1. Hwang Defection**

A top ROK Foreign Ministry official stated yesterday that DPRK defector Hwang Jang-yop will leave Beijing soon but that his arrival in Seoul will take some time. "China called on us to have Hwang stay in a third country for a considerable time until things change. We accepted it," the official stated. He added that the exact date for Hwang's departure for Seoul will be decided through talks between the ROK and the PRC. The official stated that the ROK-PRC negotiations reached a final stage although there are still several issues to be cleared. Asked where Hwang will stay temporarily en route to Seoul, the official stated that the two countries agreed not to reveal it under any circumstances for Hwang's security. During the Seoul-Beijing bargaining, ROK officials stressed that it is important to "establish the fact" that Hwang took asylum out of his free will and it is not necessary for the ROK to expect any change in the DPRK's hostile reaction to Hwang's defection. The official added that although the DPRK still disapproves of Hwang's journey to Seoul, Hwang's departure from Beijing will help the DPRK end its efforts for his repatriation. The official added that the PRC had considered two major things in allowing Hwang to leave Beijing: the application of international practices in this matter and the promotion of "stability" on the Korean peninsula. Although Hwang should come to Seoul directly from Beijing if international practices putting priority on a defector's free will are applied, the PRC still demanded that Hwang reach Seoul via a third country in view of the situation on the Korean peninsula. Agreeing to this, the ROK contacted several countries willing to grant Hwang a temporary stay and received favorable responses from some of them. The official said that the lengthy negotiations between Seoul and Beijing and the conclusion of the talks will help the two countries build "better ties." (Korea Times, "HWANG EXPECTED TO DEPART BEIJING THIS WEEK: MINISTRY," 03/17/97)

The DPRK reportedly has finished indoctrinating its residents to the fact that Hwang Jang-yop is a national traitor. These measures were apparently taken to prevent unrest as rumors of his defection began to spread widely among the nation's residents. Reporters from four Japanese newspapers, including Asahi, Mainichi, Tokyo, and Kyodo, visited the DPRK March 8-15 at the invitation of its tourism bureau. According to articles the Japanese reporters sent from Pyongyang, a DPRK official stated, "A number of military aircraft flew over Pyongyang on the day following the defection of Hwang. Citizens came to learn of the news through the word of mouth two or three days later." Most of Pyongyang's citizens the Japanese reporters met said, "Hwang is a traitor who ran away when the nation is in need," showing that they have already been informed of his defection and indoctrinated accordingly. (Joong Ang Ilbo, "INDOCTRINATION OF NORTH KOREAN RESIDENTS ON HWANG'S

'TREACHERY' APPEARS TO BE OVER," 03/17/97)

## **2. DPRK Ex-Prime Minister Reported Dead**

According to the ROK news media, former DPRK Prime Minister Kang Song-san was reported to have died. The ROK's state-run KBS television, quoting anonymous sources in Tokyo, reported on Saturday that Kang had died and Kim Dal-hyon, a former DPRK Deputy Prime Minister, had been appointed as Kang's successor. The Dong-A Ilbo also reported on Saturday that Kang had died of a chronic disease on February 22, quoting a source from the Agency for National Security Planning (NSP). A NSP spokesman, however, stated later in the day that the NSP had been unable to confirm such reports. Kang has not been seen in public since January 1, 1996. He also had not been listed as a member of the state funeral committee for Choe Kwang, the DPRK defense minister who died of a heart attack February 2. Radio Press, a Tokyo-based news agency that monitors DPRK broadcasts, reported that the DPRK's official radio made no mention of Kang in broadcasts on Saturday. According to the ROK's DPRK watchers, Kim, notably an advocate of open-door economic policy, currently heads a plastics firm. KBS quoted Tokyo sources as stating that the DPRK had postponed announcing Kang's death because of an ongoing attempt by a high-ranking DPRK official to defect to South Korea. (Korea Herald, "EX-NORTH KOREAN PRIME MINISTER KANG SONG-SAN REPORTEDLY DEAD," Kang Song-san, 03/17/97)

## **3. Taiwan Delegate Visits DPRK**

Taiwan's ruling Kuomintang Party (KMT) is to send a high-powered economic delegation to the DPRK in early April to support bilateral trade exchanges. Liu Tai-ying, director of the KMT Business Management Committee, will lead the delegation comprised of 40 executives from KMT-run businesses and state-run and private firms. He will talk with DPRK officials about its plan to set up a visa-issuing trade representative office in Taipei and establishing direct air links between the two countries. Liu added the two sides will also discuss signing an investment protection agreement to attract Taiwanese businessmen to invest in the DPRK. Yu Tai Enterprise, owned by the KMT, spearheaded economic contacts with the DPRK after the ROK switched diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to the PRC in 1992. Yu Tai sold household goods worth several million US dollars last year in exchange for mineral products such as steel and zinc provided by the DPRK's four state-run firms. Since 1991 the traditionally anti-communist Taiwan, which does not maintain official ties with the DPRK, has allowed local businessmen to trade directly with it and all other communist countries except the PRC. In January, the Taiwan Power Company signed a contract with the DPRK to dispose of 60,000 barrels of nuclear waste, triggering strong protests by the ROK. (Korea Times, "TAIWAN ECONOMIC DELEGATION TO VISIT N. KOREA IN EARLY APRIL," 03/17/97)

## **4. ROK President Stresses Ties With Japan**

ROK President Kim Young-sam yesterday emphasized that the ROK's relations with Japan are important not only to the two countries, but also to the Asia-Pacific region and the world. Kim spoke at a meeting with Yoshio Sakurauchi, acting chairman of the Japan-Korea Cooperation Committee who arrived with a Japanese delegation Sunday for a joint meeting of the Korea-Japan and Japan-Korea Cooperation Committees. Kim called for closer cooperation from Japan in tackling the DPRK issue, particularly for the early realization of the four-party talks to set up a permanent peace regime on the Korean peninsula. Commenting on Taiwan's plan to ship its nuclear waste to the DPRK, Kim stated that Japan and the bilateral cooperation panels should be concerned about the shipment's effect on Korea's environment. (Korea Times, "PRES. KIM STRESS IMPORTANCE OF SEOUL-TOKYO TIES," 03/17/97)

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. 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.

Produced by [the Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development](#).

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