

NAPSNet Daily Report 17 October, 1997

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I. United States

1. Food Aid Found on DPRK Submarine

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2. DPRK Famine

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("N.KOREA FAMINE RAMPANT DESPITE AID, HARVEST - U.S. LAWMAKER," Tokyo 10/17/97) and Reuters (Brian Williams, "U.S. CONGRESSMAN: N.KOREA ON BRINK OF DISASTER," Tokyo 10/17/97) reported that US Representative Tony Hall, following his

third visit to the DPRK, said, "International food aid is getting through and the harvest will buy a little more time, but people in the countryside continue to teeter on the brink of massive disaster." Hall also said that many hospitals are functioning without electricity, heat, medicine or food. He said that the situation "calls for a strategy that begins with emergency assistance and carries through with reforms that can rescue ordinary Koreans from the whims of both politics and nature." The UN's World Food Program plans to send in an assessment team on October 25 that will remain in the DPRK for 10 days and report on the food needs there. Hall also met top DPRK officials in Pyongyang, including Foreign Minister Kim Yong-nam and Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye-gwan, and said he was optimistic that the DPRK would rejoin peace talks, possibly before the end of the year. He said that the ministers were most concerned that food aid not be used as a political weapon during the talks. Hall added that he was convinced that US and other aid was getting through without diversion to the DPRK's military.

PRNewswire ("AMERICARES TO LAUNCH SECOND MEDICAL AIRLIFT TO NORTH KOREA," New Canaan, Connecticut, 10/17/97) carried a company press release from AmeriCares, an international humanitarian relief organization, announcing that it has reached agreement with the DPRK government for a second airlift of medicines and medical supplies to aid in famine-related suffering. The airlift, scheduled for October 30, will carry nearly 100,000 pounds of antibiotics, other medicines, and medical and nutritional supplies. The flight will also carry a special AmeriCares team of physicians and medical personnel. Robert C. Macauley, chairman and founder of AmeriCares, stated, "Throughout AmeriCares' first emergency airlift the government of the DPRK went out of its way to be helpful and cooperative with our team in the distribut

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3. DPRK Abduction of ROK Citizens

The Associated Press ("Reid G. Miller, "NKOREA ABDUCTS 2 FARMERS INSIDE DMZ," Seoul, 10/17/97), United Press International ("S.KOREA PROBING KIDNAPPING AT DMZ," Seoul, 10/17/97) and Reuters (Jane Lee, " N.KOREAN GUARDS ABDUCT S.KOREANS ON BORDER," Seoul, 10/17/97) reported that the United Nations said that 12 armed DPRK border guards crossed into the southern half of the demilitarized zone and abducted two ROK farmers on Friday. ROK Defense Ministry spokesman Kang June-kwon stated, "The Republic of Korea government strongly demands that North Korea promptly and safely return the two citizens to the South." The Defense Ministry said that the abductees were from the village of Taesong-dong and were abducted while working in rice paddies in the southern side of the Joint Security Area. However, the DPRK's official Pyongyang Radio, monitored by the ROK's Naewoe Press, said that the farmers were in the northern half of the buffer zone and were seized by border patrol on routine duty. The farmers were "under investigation," the broadcast stated. Kim Young-kyu, a spokesman for the United Nations Command, said that UN officials met with DPRK military officers at Panmunjom in an attempt to obtain the pair's release, but the meeting ended without result. The command reported that there had been no exchange of fire. UN Command spokesman Jim Coles earlier said that the DPRK had indicated that it would return the two farmers, but later stated that he "misspoke and went beyond what is known of the situation" due to an administrative error in his office.

4. DPRK Foreign Trade

Reuters ("N.KOREA'S H1 FOREIGN TRADE RISES 4.8 PCT-SEOUL," Seoul, 10/17/97) reported that the ROK National Unification Ministry said on Friday that the DPRK's volume of foreign trade rose to US\$870 million in the first half of this year, up 4.8 percent from a year earlier. The ministry said that the DPRK's exports rose 9.1 percent to US\$300 million, while its imports remained flat at US\$570 million, resulting in a deficit of US\$270 million, compared to a US\$310 million deficit in the first half of 1996. It said inter-Korean trade in the first half of this year rose 25 percent to US\$150 million.

5. Jiang Zemin's US Visit

The Wall Street Journal (Eduardo Lachica, "JIANG'S U.S. VISIT TO BE RICHER IN SYMBOLS THAN IN SUBSTANCE," Washington, 10/17/97) reported that PRC President Jiang Zemin's upcoming US visit is being carefully arranged by his aides to avoid contentiousness and to raise his stature internationally as well as at home. US officials meanwhile are downplaying the likelihood of major agreements resulting from Jiang's visit. A State Department official stated, "We're working hard to lower expectations about getting results from one basket of interests or another. What we're trying to do is to solidify a relationship that can be of mutual benefit going into the next century." US House Speaker Newt Gingrich is arranging a "bicameral bipartisan" session for Jiang with the

congressional leadership. But some US lawmakers are concerned about the possibility of missing an opportunity to let the PRC leader feel the full weight of US concerns regarding the PRC. House Democratic Leader Richard Gephardt and human-rights proponents in his party have complained that the Republican leadership is deferring to the PRC's wishes by not allowing an array of controversial bills to be debated on the House floor before Jiang's visit. A spokeswoman for Gingrich said that the speaker is consulting with the administration on the "timing of this debate."

II. Republic of Korea

1. ROK Naval Development

The ROK Navy launched its second high-tech destroyer in less than a year in a ceremony Thursday at the Daewoo shipyards on the southern island of Koje. Under the Navy's KDX-1 program, a third of the Daewoo-built 3,200-ton advanced destroyers are to be built by 1998. The ROK Navy is also planning a KDX-2 program, which aims at the acquisition of six 4,500-ton destroyers by 2006, replacing on a gradual basis the US ships which will be decommissioned. The Navy also hopes to acquire Aegis Cruisers under a KDX-3 program, but has yet to get the ROK Defense Ministry's approval. (Korea Herald, "NAVY LAUNCHES 2ND HIGH-TECH DESTROYER," 10/17/97)

2. Donated Food found on DPRK Submarine

The ROK Ministry of National Defense announced that a US group that toured Chinhae Naval Base last August found a label in English from a tin of beef in the DPRK submarine which infiltrated ROK waters last year. The half burned label read "food for relief, in the name of Christ, food not for resale." Military authorities say that the label is from canned goods given as aid by a Mennonite church in North Virginia. (Chosun Ilbo, "CANNED GOODS FROM US FOUND IN NK SUBMARINE," 10/17/97)

3. DPRK Abduction of ROK Citizens

The ROK Ministry of National Defense and the United Nations Command (UNC) stated that two ROK citizens were kidnapped Friday morning by twelve DPRK soldiers who infiltrated the De-Militarized Zone (DMZ). The two abducted, 67 year-old Hong Sung-soon and her son, Kim Yeong-bok, are residents of Taesongdong, a village situated within the DMZ whose residents are given special residential status by both the ROK and the DPRK. The UNC said that the incident occurred in the joint security area 2 kilometers from Panmunjon and 20 to 30 meters from the border, and that there were no reports of gunshots. ROK authorities and the UNC demanded the immediate return of the two. DPRK officials replied that they will negotiate this through the Armistice Committee. (Chosun Ilbo, "NK FORCES KIDNAP TWO RESIDENTS FROM SOUTH," 10/17/97)

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

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