

# NAPSNet Daily Report 18 August, 1997

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## **I. United States**

### **1. ROK Defector to DPRK**

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## **2. DPRK Nuclear Fuel Canning Near Finished**

The Associated Press ("MOST OF N. KOREA NUKE FUEL ENCASED," Seoul, 8/17/97) reported that ROK Ministry of National Unification officials said Sunday that US experts have encased ninety percent the DPRK's 8,000 spent nuclear fuel rods in steel and concrete for safe storage. The ROK officials said the encasing -- also known as "canning" -- will be completed before the end of the year. The rods, removed from the DPRK's only operational nuclear reactor, could if reprocessed produce enough plutonium to make four or five nuclear bombs. Western officials suspect that the DPRK may already have enough plutonium for at least one bomb. Although the DPRK has insisted that its nuclear program is only to generate power, it signed an accord with the US in 1994 in which it agreed to abandon its nuclear program and tear down the Soviet-designed reactor in return for two Western-designed light-water reactors, which will produce far less plutonium. Under the deal, the old rods will be moved out of the DPRK once the new reactors are built. The Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), a US-led international consortium, is scheduled to break ground for construction of the reactors on Tuesday. [Ed. note: See the following item, and also "KEDO to Begin Construction of DPRK Reactors" in the ROK section, below.]

## **3. KEDO to Begin Construction of DPRK Reactors**

US State Department Spokesman James Rubin ("STATE DEPT. NOON BRIEFING, MONDAY, AUGUST 18," USIA Transcript, 8/18/97) stated that the August 19 groundbreaking ceremony for the DPRK light-water nuclear reactor construction project will be "an important milestone in our efforts to achieve the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula." The project, being carried out by the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), increases the chances that the existing DPRK nuclear program "will remain frozen and will eventually be dismantled," Rubin said. Rubin also noted that the US and the DPRK are "nearing completion" of the project to safely store the DPRK's existing stock of spent nuclear fuel, "which would otherwise be available for the production of weapons-grade plutonium." Rubin asserted, "In short, this bargain that we struck with North Korea is working. We have stopped the possibility of a major nuclear program breaking out in the dangerous Korean Peninsula." Rubin added, "I would remind you that the key components to make those reactors work ... are not going to be provided until we believe that North Korea has come into full compliance with the safeguard agreements with the International Atomic Energy (Agency). ... That is the trigger for them to be able to have the components that would make these light water reactors functional. ... During that time we hope we will be as successful on these other areas of compliance as we have been on the freeze and on the canning of the spent fuel."

## **4. US-ROK Military Exercises**

Reuters ("U.S., S.KOREA BEGIN MILITARY EXERCISES," Seoul, 8/18/97) reported that the US and the ROK on Monday launched joint military exercises to test their preparedness against threats from the DPRK. Military officials said that the annual maneuvers, code-named Ulchi Focus Lens, would feature computer-simulated war games and involve tens of thousands of ROK troops as well as 16,500 US soldiers. A ROK Defense Ministry statement said this year's exercise was upgraded to include "situation drills aimed at improving capability in a real crisis." "The danger of reckless provocation has increased because of growing uncertainty caused by North Korea's food crisis," it said. To make the exercises more real, 28 fighter jets, posing as enemy planes, will appear unannounced over 40 South Korean cities, a military spokesman said. "Ulchi Focus Lens is designed to evaluate and improve combined and joint coordination, procedures, plans and systems necessary

for the conduct of contingency operations of the Republic of Korea and the U.S. government in the defense of the Republic of Korea," a U.S. military spokesman said. ROK officials said the exercises, an annual event since 1976, had long been planned and had nothing to do with the four-party peace talks into which the US and the ROK are seeking to draw the DPRK. However, the DPRK has criticized the US and the ROK for planning Ulchi Focus Lens, describing the exercise "an extremely threatening act." "They are talking peace but if they are going to act against the process with these war drills, then there is no reason for communication and the talks have no meaning," a DPRK spokesman said earlier this month.

## **5. US View of Global Landmine Ban**

US State Department Spokesman James Rubin ("STATE DEPT. NOON BRIEFING, MONDAY, AUGUST 18," USIA Transcript, 8/18/97) stated that the US will join the Ottawa Process working towards an international ban on anti-personnel land mines. Rubin said a US team of negotiators will meet with representatives of 17 countries, including Canada, Norway, South Africa, Germany, France and the United Kingdom, "to discuss how the United States can propose changes in the agreement that is emerging, so that as it is negotiated in the month of September, we can be in a position to support that agreement and sign that agreement." The US will be seeking a "geographic exception" for Korea. "Our defense officials believe that anti-personnel landmines are required," Rubin said, in order for the US to fulfill the international mandate to protect the Korean peninsula. He described the situation in Korea as fraught with "unique dangers," and expressed hope that other countries will be "logical" and "thoughtful" about the need for this geographic exception. Rubin added that the US team will seek to improve verification provisions on the landmine ban, particularly in the area of information exchange. The team will also seek to ensure that the agreement that emerges is limited to anti-personnel landmines, and not to devices that might, for example, protect a location from jeeps or tanks. [Ed. note: See also "US, ROK View of Global Landmine Ban" in the August 13 Daily Report and "Landmine Ban Colloquium Statement" in the August 15 Daily Report.]

## **II. Republic of Korea**

### **1. KEDO to Begin Construction of DPRK Reactors**

The ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of two light water reactors in the DPRK by the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) is scheduled to be held next Tuesday at the Kumho area of Sinpo city, Hamnam province. The ceremony will be attended by officials from three KEDO sponsoring nations, including Steven Bosworth, KEDO secretary general, Chang Sun-sup, director of the ROK Light-Water Nuclear Reactor Project Office, and eighty other dignitaries and reporters. Participants will board the Marine College training vessel 'Hanarraho' in Tonghae port Monday evening and arrive at Yanghwa port Tuesday morning. They will stay overnight aboard ship and return to the ROK the next day. (Chosun Ilbo, "GROUND-BREAKING FOR LIGHT WATER REACTOR SCHEDULED TUESDAY," 08/15/97)

Three member nations of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) will begin full-scale negotiations on sharing the cost for the light water reactor construction in the DPRK as soon as they have completed assessing the total outlay, Chang Sun-sup, director of the ROK Light-Water Nuclear Reactor Project Office, said yesterday. The first-stage of construction work, which will begin Tuesday, will cost some US\$45 million, Chang told reporters. He will leave for the DPRK Monday along with some 80 officials from KEDO, the US, Japan and the ROK to attend the groundbreaking for the construction of the two nuclear reactors in Sinpo, DPRK. Chang said the Korea Electric Power Corp. (KEPCO), the prime contractor for the KEDO reactor project, put forward a rough estimate of magnitude of the construction cost in July last year, which is now under

review by the ROK, the US and Japan. "We need to end our discussions on it soon in order for the light-water nuclear reactor construction to proceed smoothly," he said. He forecast that negotiations will not be very tough in view of the accumulated informal talks on the issue among the three countries. "We haven't decided anything including the format of the formal negotiations. However, informally we have discussed much about the issue since KEPCO drew up the ROM. It will be helpful for future negotiations," he said. (Korea Herald, "KEDO MEMBERS TO BEGIN NEGOTIATION ON COST-SHARING ," 08/18/97)

## **2. DPRK Chemical Weapons Capabilities Asserted**

The DPRK has facilities to produce 15.2 tons of chemical weapons daily in eight locations and capability to mount 70 tons of chemical weapons at a time, according to figures released by the Joint Chiefs of Staff headquarters on Sunday. The DPRK is also presumed to have four laboratories, eight production plants, and six storage areas for chemical weapons with a daily capacity of 15.2 tons that can be increased to 40 tons in war time. The report said that the estimated amount of chemical weapons in store is over 1,000 tons, and the DPRK can launch 70 tons worth with rockets, missiles and artillery to attack the ROK metropolitan area. (Chosun Ilbo, "DPRK HAS 70 TONS OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS," 08/18/97)

## **3. ROK-Japan Territorial Waters Dispute**

A Japanese local district court in Hamada, Shimane Prefecture, on Friday dismissed the case of Captain Kim Sung-ki of the ship Daedongho, who had been indicted under the suspicion of illegal fishing. Chief Judge Yasahiro Hasakawa said that since the Japanese constitution stipulates respect for international treaties, the ROK-Japan Fishery Agreement must be upheld. Captain Kim, freed promptly by the decision, is expected to arrive in the ROK next Monday. The court said the fishery accord stipulates that when and if the content of the agreement is to be changed the party must inform and acquire consent from the other country. The Japanese Government unilaterally had set a straight base line without the consent of the ROK government. (Chosun Ilbo, "JAPANESE COURT UPHOLDS KOREA-JAPAN FISHERY ACCORD," 08/16/97)

Japan and the ROK agreed Thursday to temporarily set aside their dispute over which side owns the Tokto islands while they negotiate a separate fisheries pact. The latest two-day round of fisheries talks concluded with the ROK easing its insistence that sovereignty over the disputed islands be settled before any discussions on who can fish where, a ROK Foreign Ministry official said. The Tokto islands, known as Takeshima by Japan, lie about halfway between the two states and fall within the 200-nautical-mile (230 miles, or 370 kilometers) exclusive economic zones of both states. Currently, the ROK controls them. However, fixing the boundaries of the exclusive zones, being set up under the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea, requires settling the decades-old dispute over who owns the islands. (Korea Times, "KOREA, JAPAN SET ASIDE TOK-DO DISPUTE AT TOKYO FISHERS TALKS," 08/16/97)

## **4. ROK to Accept More Russian Weapons**

The ROK government is studying a plan to receive payment for its 1991 US\$1.47 billion economic credit loan to Russia in the form of goods and weapons. Russia, economically struggling, defaulted on loan payments in 1994, and owes some US\$2.5-3 billion, including interest. A high ranking ROK government official said Friday it is inevitable that the debt will be paid back through goods, mainly defense equipment. The types of weapons and time of introduction will be discussed in negotiations scheduled in the latter half of this year with Russia, he added. The weapons are expected to be imported by next year if not earlier. Since 1995, parts of the loan have been paid through steel and aluminum products, military weapons and helicopters. During 1996 and 1997, Russia sent weapons

worth US\$152 million, including T-80U tanks and BMP-3 armored carriers. (Chosun Ilbo, "GOVERNMENT TO INTRODUCE MORE RUSSIAN WEAPONS," 08/16/97)

## 5. ROK Contribution to the UN

The US ambassador to the UN, Bill Richardson, yesterday asked the ROK to double its financial contribution to the UN. "In light of Korea's economic success and its growing political influence around the world, we think Korea should do more in the UN," he said. "Under our proposal, the ROK will pay about one percent of the UN's regular and peace-keeping budgets," Richardson said at the ROK Foreign Ministry. The ROK paid US\$8.9 million, or 0.82 percent, to the UN regular budget for 1997. A ROK foreign ministry official said the ROK is ready to support the UN commensurate with its economic capability, but added that the increase should be gradual and matched with increases in the number of high-level officials from the ROK at the UN Secretariat. Richardson said the US supports increased ROK participation, profile and personnel in UN organizations. Richardson arrived in Seoul Wednesday for a two-day visit on the first leg of his tour of Asian and European countries. (Korea Herald, Kim Kyung-ho, "AMBASSADOR RICHARDSON ASKS SEOUL TO DOUBLE FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO UN," 08/15/97)

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