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I. United States

1. US Remains in DPRK

Reuters ("NORTH KOREANS TO RETURN TO U.S. REMAINS OF 14," 8/18/00) reported that the US Defense Department said on August 17 that the DPRK is preparing to turn over remains believed to be those of 14 US soldiers missing since the Korean War. The remains, recovered by a joint US-DPRK investigation team, will be flown on August 19 on a US Air Force aircraft from Pyongyang to Yokota Air Base in Japan, where a UN Command repatriation ceremony will be held. The 14 remains, the largest number recovered during a single search operation in the DPRK, later will be flown to Hawaii and taken to the US Army's Central Identification Laboratory for forensic examination and identification. [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for August 18, 2000.]

2. DPRK-Japan Relations

Reuters ("N.KOREA DEMANDS JAPAN COMPENSATION AS TALKS LOOM," Tokyo, 8/18/00) reported that the DPRK on Friday repeated its call on Japan to "settle its past," demanding just four days before talks on restoring diplomatic ties that Japan pay reparations for its harsh colonial rule of the Korean peninsula. DPRK's official Rodong Sinmun said Japanese compensation would be the key

to improving ties between the historical foes, echoing similar remarks made by DPRK leader Kim Jong-il on August 14 who told visiting ROK media executives that "We will never set up ties with Japan at the expense of our pride." A DPRK delegation will arrive in Tokyo on August 21 for a second round of talks aimed at establishing diplomatic ties. The delegation will stay until August 25, with discussions scheduled for August 22 and 24. The Rodong Sinmun said, "Japan should properly settle its past, clearly mindful that a master key to opening diplomatic relations between the DPRK (North Korea) and Japan lies in Japan's honest redress for its past. Japan has done nothing to redress its past although half a century has passed since its defeat and it even evades an apology to it, to say nothing of compensation,"

3. Reunion of Separated Families

The Washington Post (Kathryn Tolbert and Joohee Cho, "KOREANS PART, SOME FOREVER," Seoul, 8/18/00) reported that the four day DPRK-ROK exchange of separated families ended Friday. The reunions were the first tangible outcome of June's summit between ROK President Kim Dae-jung and DPRK leader Kim Jong-il. This week's limited exchange of 100 people from each side was seen as an important first step to improving relations between the two Koreas. Lee Geum Soon, an analyst at the Korea Institute for National Unification, said, "The separated families issue is both humanitarian and highly political. Until now, the two Koreas could not open the subject with confidence because they lacked mutual trust." The reunions were tightly controlled. All meetings were conducted in rooms at the hotel and were limited to five ROK family members for each visiting DPRK member. They met privately for two hours on each of two days. The rest of the time the DPRK Nationals took half-day tours of cultural sites without their families. Some meals were together, but the farewell banquet on the night of August 17 was only for the DPRK visitors, their handlers, and prominent ROK residents, but not their relatives. The ROK delegation visiting Pyongyang followed a similar schedule. Kim Man Jai, assemblyman from the opposition Grand National Party and a guest at the dinner said, "We understand the rigid format is necessary because it's the first time. I'm not sure people will tolerate the same format over and over. Then we'd become suspicious of Kim Jong Il's intentions." Except for the two-hour private meetings, the DPRK visitors were constantly surrounded by officials from both sides.

4. US Military in ROK

The Associated Press ("PART OF BOMBING RANGE TO BE CLOSED," Seoul, 8/18/00) reported that the ROK and the US military announced Friday that they will shut down part of the controversial Koon-Ni bombing range used by US fighter jets in the ROK. The range, used exclusively by the US Air Force, has been a constant source of friction with villagers where residents, leftist, and civic groups have staged a number of demonstrations. Friday's decision will turn the strafing range into a "safety zone" for 236 homes nearby. ROK Air Force Chief of Staff Lee Han-ho said at a news conference with US military officials, "We regret that (the bombing range) caused much inconvenience to the residents and concerns to the general public." However, the US Air Force will continue to use a bombing range on the islet, three-quarters of a mile from shore. That caveat angered the villagers, who have been demanding the closure of the entire range since the 1960s. Chun Man-kyu, a spokesman for the villagers of Maeyang-ri, where the range is located, said, "This announcement mocks us. It does not offer a fundamental solution."

5. Cross-Strait Relations

Associated Press ("CHINA DEFENDS RIGHT TO TARGET TAIWAN," Beijing, 8/17/00) reported that

PRC military experts warned again on August 16 against including Taiwan in a proposed US antimissile system, saying it could be used to set the PRC against the island. In comments published in the PRC's official China Daily newspaper, experts also defended the PRC's targeting of missiles at Taiwan and said including the island in an antimissile system would impact PRC-US ties. Luo Yuan, a strategic studies director at the Chinese army's Academy of Military Science, was quoted as saying, "There is no reason for military conflict between China and the U.S. except on the question of Taiwan. The U.S. global strategy in Europe is to contain Russia's revival and in Asia to contain China's growth and is to preserve U.S. hegemony in the world." The PRC also worried that a proposed more limited shield to protect US troops and allies in Asia could also be extended to cover Taiwan, negating PRC missile forces that would form the backbone of any attack on the island. Song Xuefeng, a researcher at the military academy said in the paper, "It means the U.S. could pitch a part of China against China. China was within its rights to deploy missiles on its own soil to prevent Taiwan from separating from the country."

6. US-PRC Relations

Agence France Presse ("CHINESE LEADER LI PENG TO VISIT UNITED STATES," Beijing, 8/18/00) reported that PRC officials said Friday that PRC parliamentary head Li Peng will make a rare visit to the US to attend a United Nations-sponsored conference. Li, chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC), will visit New York from August 30 to September 1 for the Millennium Conference for Presiding Officers of Parliaments. An NPC spokesman said Li will meet his foreign counterparts but did not say whether he has scheduled any meetings on the sideline with US officials. Joseph Cheng, a political scientist at City University in Hong Kong said Li's visit will likely be played down by both the PRC and the US administration to avoid problems for either side in the upcoming US presidential race and in the vote to grant PRC trade privileges. PRC President Jiang Zemin is also expected to be in the US for three days beginning September 6 for the UN's Millennium Head of State Summit, where world leaders will discuss topics including poverty and development, preventing disputes, environmental issues and strengthening the UN's role. It has not been disclosed whether Jiang will have any scheduled meetings with US President Bill Clinton.

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International Policy Studies Institute Seoul, Republic of Korea
The Center for Global Communications, Tokyo, Japan
Center for American Studies,
Fudan University, Shanghai, People's Republic of China
Monash Asia Institute,
Monash University, Clayton, Australia

Timothy L. Savage: napsnet@nautilus.org
Berkeley, California, United States

Gee Gee Wong: napsnet@nautilus.org

Berkeley, California, United States

Robert Brown: napsnet@nautilus.org
Berkeley, California, United States

Kim Hee-sun: khs688@hotmail.com
Seoul, Republic of Korea

Hiroyasu Akutsu: akutsu@glocomnet.or.jp
Tokyo, Japan

Peter Razvin: icipu@glas.apc.org
Moscow, Russian Federation

Yunxia Cao: yule111@sina.com
Shanghai, People's Republic of China

Dingli Shen: dlshen@fudan.ac.cn
Shanghai, People's Republic of China

John McKay: John.McKay@adm.monash.edu.au
Clayton, Australia

Leanne Payton: lbpat1@smtp.monash.edu.au
Clayton, Australia

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Nautilus Institute
608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email: nautilus@nautilus.org