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I. United States

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1. Alleged DPRK Executions

The Associated Press (Sang-Hun Choe, "DEFECTOR: N. KOREA EXECUTED DOZENS," Seoul, 02/18/98) and Reuters ("DEFECTOR SAYS NORTH KOREA ECONOMIC HARDSHIP WORST," Seoul, 02/18/98) reported that Kim Dong-su, a former DPRK diplomat in Italy who defected earlier this month, said that the DPRK executed dozens of officials last year. [Ed. note: See DPRK Defector in the US Section of the February 6 Daily Report.] Kim said that most of those executed were from a

youth league linked with the ruling Workers' Party and had been charged with spying. He said that the case also put in question the future of Chang Sung-taek, a brother-in-law and confidant of Kim Jong-il, who heads the Organization and Guidance Department of the Workers' Party. ROK intelligence officials said that while Chang does not appear to have been directly involved in the alleged spy case, his department is responsible for supervising the socialist youth league. Kim added that agriculture secretary Suh Kwan-hee was among those executed. He said that he decided to defect because he feared he would be purged because of his criticism of the DPRK leadership during private conversations in Rome. Regarding the food situation in the DPRK, Kim said he had only heard rumors that 2.8 million people could be dead. He added that the people's "discontent is coming up to the crust," and communist party members were putting up iron gates to their houses for fear of riots. An official of the ROK National Security Agency stated that Kim's remarks were "the first reliable confirmation of a major political purge carried out under Kim Jong-il."

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2. Alleged DPRK Drug Smuggling

Reuters ("INTERPOL: KOREAN DIPLOMATS SMUGGLED COCAINE," Lyon, 02/18/98) reported that the international police agency Interpol said on Wednesday that two diplomats from the DPRK embassy in Mexico were arrested on January 17 at Moscow's international airport for trying to smuggle 35 kilograms of cocaine through Russia. The agency added that the Russian Federal Security Service investigated the two and then handed them over to the DPRK embassy in Moscow.

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3. DPRK-Japan-ROK Sea Route

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("N. KOREA MAY OPEN A SEA ROUTE TO JAPAN VIA S. KOREA," Tokyo, 02/18/98) reported that Kim Su-yong, an advisor to the DPRK's Rajin-Sonbong free- trade zone project and a professor of economics at Kim Il-sung University, said Wednesday that the DPRK is considering opening a new sea route to Japan and the ROK to increase travel and trade. In a speech delivered at an annual meeting of the Northeast Asia Economic Conference currently being held in Japan, Kim stated that the DPRK government is hoping to establish regular passenger liner service between Rajin and the Japanese city of Fukuoka via Pusan in the ROK. He added that a passenger ship route between Rajin and the ROK city of Sokcho is also under consideration. Kim said that the DPRK also wants to open other routes to link the free-trade area in Rajin with other Japanese cities and to increase transportation routes to Russia and the PRC.

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4. DPRK Participation in Olympics

The Washington Post (Kevin Sullivan, "IN OLYMPIC WAR ON ICE, A THAW BETWEEN THE TWO KOREAS," Nagano, 02/18/98, C07) reported that the four main adversaries in the Korean War, the DPRK, the ROK, the PRC, and the US raced head-to-head in short-track speedskating in the women's 3,000-meter relay on Wednesday, the first time all four nations have faced each other in a single Olympic competition. Choe Kwan-ik, a spokesman for the Chosen Soren, an organization of DPRK citizens in Japan, stated, "It's a coincidence, but it's symbolic: Let's make peace."

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5. Asian Financial Crisis

The Associated Press (Martin Crutsinger, "FINANCE OFFICIALS DISCUSS REFORMS," Washington, 02/18/98) reported that US Deputy Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers said that discussions Tuesday among officials representing the finance ministries and central banks of 22 nations resulted in general agreement on several key points. The preparatory talks among lower-level aides were designed to set the agenda for a conference of the same countries called by US President Bill Clinton for later this year, probably in April. Summers said that the group did not reach any specific agreements but had reached general consensus that any solutions to the Asian financial crisis had to be based on free markets, increased openness by governments in providing accurate financial data, and the "indispensable" role of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In another development, the IMF executive board approved disbursing another US$2 billion of the US$21 billion in total loans it has pledged for the ROK.

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6. PRC-Australian Security Talks

Reuters ("AUSTRALIA, CHINA DISCUSS SECURITY DIFFERENCES," Canberra, 02/17/98) reported that General John Baker, chief of the Australian defense force, said on Wednesday that he raised concerns over the PRC's chemical weapons program during a visit by PRC Defense Minister Chi Haotian. He added that the two also discussed their countries' opposing positions on Iraq and concerns over social strife in Indonesia.

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7. Alleged Japanese War Crimes

Reuters (Yvonne Chang, "ALLIED POWS TO MAKE FINAL DEMANDS IN JAPANESE COURT," Tokyo, 02/18/98) reported that three former Allied prisoners of war, one each from Britain, the US, and New Zealand, will appear in a Japanese court on Thursday to make a final demand for a formal apology and compensation from the Japanese government for their treatment during World War II. The plaintiffs represent six organizations that jointly launched a lawsuit in January 1995 demanding an official apology and compensation of US$22,000 each from the Japanese government.

II. Republic of Korea

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1. ROK-DPRK Meeting

An ROK foreign ministry spokesman said on February 17 that officials from the two Koreas will meet each other at two regional meetings on disarmament this week. A UN regional disarmament meeting opened in Jakarta Tuesday for a three-day session. Two ROK delegates and three DPRK delegates are attending the meeting. The same delegations will also attend the 10th regional meeting on peace and disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, to be held in Katmandu February 20-24. (Korea Herald, "OFFICIALS FROM 2 KOREAS MEET AT REGIONAL TALKS," 02/18/98)

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2. International Bank Officials to Visit DPRK

A delegation of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) will visit the DPRK on February 21 to discern the economic situation there, an ROK foreign ministry official said

on February 17. The delegation will also discuss with DPRK officials the possibility of dispatching a World Bank task force to review the DPRK's economic situation. The IBRD delegation will visit Seoul on March 3 to debrief ROK officials on the outcome of its DPRK visit. (Korea Herald, "IBRD DELEGATION TO VISIT DPRK," 02/18/98)

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3. ROK-Russian Relation

Russia is offering to supply high-end weapons systems to the ROK as repayment for its debt to the ROK, said a representative in Seoul of Rosvoorouzhenie, Russia's state-run weapons brokerage firm. Russia in 1991 inherited US$1.47 billion in debts that the former Soviet Union owed to the ROK. The ROK accepted the offer and its defense ministry is scheduled to receive an assortment of Russian-made weapons worth US$210 million by the end of 1998 under a project code-named "Red Bear." Russia is hoping to pay more than 60 percent of the remaining debts with weapons, the Rosvoorouzhenie official said. However, Russia demands that 50 percent of the costs for its weapons delivered to the ROK be paid for in hard currency. Sources at the ROK Finance and Economy Ministry said that negotiations on the debt issue have been halted and further decisions will be made by the incoming administration. However, defense ministry officials have demonstrated dissenting views on additional weapons from Russia despite the recent cancellation of ROK procurement plans. The defense administration has argued against the compatibility and adaptability of Russian weapons in the ROK. Included in the shopping list sent by Russia are S-300 anti-aircraft missiles, submarines, and MiG-29 and S-35 fighter jets. (Korea Times, Oh Young-jin, "RUSSIA TRYING HARD TO OPEN KOREA'S WEAPONS MARKET," 02/18/98)

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4. ROK Diplomacy

The government transfer committee for ROK President-elect Kim Dae-jung criticized the outgoing administration for its poor diplomacy with the US and Japan. The committee said in a white paper that President Kim Young-sam was unable to elicit full confidence from allied leaders as he frequently resorted to unprincipled, hard-line postures on bilateral issues. The committee argued that US President Bill Clinton personally had sought to avoid meeting President Kim if possible, citing statements by working- level officials in the Kim administration that they had difficulty in arranging the ROK-US summit. In addition, the committee argued that emotional reactions to Japan over the fisheries issue have antagonized ROK-Japan relations. According to the committee, the outgoing administration has purged pro-Japanese elders in the ROK such as Park Tae-joon, founder of the Pohang Iron and Steel Co. (POSCO). The ROK lost a main pipeline to Japan as ROK politicians respected by Japan were lost, the committee said. (Korea Times, Lee Chang-sup, "WASHINGTON, TOKYO UNHAPPY WITH PRES. KIM'S DIPLOMATIC POLICY," 02/18/98)

III. Analysis

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1. Response to Policy Forum Online #13

[The following is a response to the NAPSNet Policy Forum Online #13, Kim Jong-il's Peace Policy, by John Kim, Esq., General Secretary of the National Association of Korean Americans (NAKA).]

I read Myong Chol Kim's article on the DPRK's peace and security policy and Dr. W.G. Kim's

comment with much interest. I think both have good points, but both may be wrong in certain respects.

First of all, I am glad to hear that "Kim Jong-il is committed to a drastic overhaul of political-economic institutions." However, it seems the reform process is moving too slowly. How is the North going to resolve its food, energy, and other economic problems at this slow pace of reform? Too many people may die of starvation before they can be helped by the slow introduction of reforms.

As for the peace treaty between the US and DPRK, M.C. Kim must be daydreaming. First of all, the US never declared a formal war on the North. US troops were sent to Korea under the US-sponsored UN resolutions. Under the circumstances, it is difficult to see how the US government will sign such a treaty. Secondly, even if such a treaty were signed, there is little chance that it would be ratified by the Republican-dominated Senate.

Dr. Kim's suggestion that the North should sign a peace treaty with the South also does not make sense. The North and South already signed a non-aggression agreement in 1991. Then, why do we need another agreement of a similar nature? Besides, the Korean War had a civil war character, and it is unnecessary and awkward to sign a formal peace treaty for two brothers to end their conflict. What is needed is mutual recognition of their mistakes, apology, and mutual reaffirmation of the 1991 agreement.

With the inauguration of a new President in the South, the North should really reach out to the South and try to implement the 1991 agreement. The North should respond positively to the recent call for a North- South summit meeting by President-elect Kim Dae-jung. By doing so, they will take a big step forward for mutual reconciliation and reduction of tensions in Korea. It is about time that Koreans have some confidence in themselves that they can solve their problems on their own initiatives.

Once the North improves its relations with the South, then the US will also be more willing to improve its relations with the North. Lifting economic sanctions and normalizing relations between the two may be possible thereafter. Thus, it would be more realistic for the North to seek a treaty of friendship and commerce with the US instead of a peace treaty.

As for the future utility of the four talks, I think it is wide-open as for the possible agenda. There can be many subjects on which the four parties can talk about constructively. For instance, how about starting discussions on improving communications on military exercises and incidents, arms control measures (e.g., signing the Ottawa Landmine Treaty, stopping all imports of military weapons by both Koreas), and arms reduction measures on the Korean Peninsula? Both Koreas desperately need to reduce their defense spending to overcome the current economic crisis on each side. How about a discussion on holding a summit meeting of the heads of the four-parties or six parties to end the Cold War in Korea?

Although both Koreas face great difficulties, if their leaders are wise, they can certainly seize this time of crisis and new opportunity to begin a new era of hope, peace, reconciliation, and mutual development-- realizing their long-cherished dream of a peaceful reunification of Korea in the process. God bless Koreans!

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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