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I. United States

1. DPRK Famine

The Christian Science Monitor (Cameron W. Barr, "N. KOREA'S FEAST AND FAMINE," Tokyo, 02/18/99) reported that Ho Jong-man, deputy chairman of the pro-DPRK General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, said that the DPRK's food shortages are temporary. Ho stated, "Wait for another two to three years. We will be helping others." A secretly-filmed videotape, shot last fall by a DPRK refugee now in hiding in the PRC, showed scenes of private markets where vendors sold noodles, vegetables, and manufactured goods. One anonymous US official who has seen the tape said that the markets may help keep the country adequately fed and lessen discontent. He stated, "The bottom line is that North Korea could be around for a while." Katsumi Sato, a longtime Tokyo-based DPRK watcher, warned against a US "package deal" for the DPRK. Sato argued, "It would only make North Korea happy. The US doesn't know Kim Jong-il. They don't know what Kim Jong-il is capable of. The best [strategy] is to apply militaristic pressure so an internal breakdown takes place." Yasuhiko Yoshida, a professor of international relations at Saitama University, who has visited the DPRK several times, stated, "The line of the US is that North Korea is unpredictable, that Kim Jong-il is an enigma, that you don't know what he has in mind - I don't think so. They are very

logical and clear." Yoshida said that the DPRK agenda is to preserve the long-term survival of the regime, gain access to food and economic assistance, and negotiate diplomatic recognition from the US. He said that these gains would enable the DPRK to negotiate with the ROK on a more equal footing. Yoshida added that the famine does not pressure the DPRK government too much. He stated, "I went to Pyongyang last fall and every day I was treated to luxurious food, the food for the elite. They don't care about people starving in the countryside." [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for February 18.]

2. ROK Political Prisoners

The Associated Press ("S. KOREA CONSIDERS RELEASING LONG-TERM POLITICAL PRISONERS," Seoul, 02/18/99) reported that ROK officials said Thursday that the Justice Ministry will ask President Kim Dae-jung to unconditionally release 17 Communist spies who have served 30 or more years and have refused to sign a statement promising not to violate the ROK's laws. Justice Minister Park Sang-cheon stated, "It will be inhumane if we insist that they sign the statement, because we know that will put their families in danger." President Kim plans to release a large number of prisoners held for political or labor-related crimes in a special amnesty to mark the March 1 anniversary of Korea's uprising against Japanese colonial rule in 1919.

3. Russian Nuclear Safety

The Associated Press (John Diamond, "DECLASSIFIED SPY PHOTOS STUDIED," Washington, 02/17/99) reported that Joshua Handler of Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School said at a symposium Tuesday at the Carnegie Endowment for Peace that declassified US intelligence photographs of secret Soviet nuclear weapons facilities show that Russia may have enough secure storage space to enable thousands more nuclear warheads to be removed from missiles under the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START). Handler argued that as Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakstan have eliminated their nuclear arsenals, the number of active storage sites has shrunk dramatically, as has the cost of providing adequate security. He stated, "Now it is clear that the number of storages is much smaller, their locations are more well-known and the possibility of understanding the cost of upgrading their security is much greater." He said that, based on Russian cost estimates, 20 national-level weapons storage sites and 60 smaller, military storage sites could be secured for US$400 million.

4. US Sanctions on India

The Associated Press (George Gedda, "U.S. SOFTENS INDIA SANCTIONS," Washington, 02/17/99) reported that an unnamed US official said Wednesday that the US is dropping its objections to a US$150 million World Bank loan request by India for a power project. He added that US President Bill Clinton has been in contact recently with Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif about the possibility of a presidential visit to the subcontinent this year. He also said that Clinton is seeking assurance that any such visit would not be dominated by the same nuclear problems that have been the subject of repeated discussions at lower levels. The official ruled out the possibility that India and Pakistan would be classified as official nuclear powers, saying that the US holds that any such acknowledgment would only encourage other countries to seek to develop a nuclear weapons capability themselves. He added that many countries--including Ukraine, Kazakstan, South Africa, Japan, Germany, Brazil, and Argentina--have been urging the US to stay firm on this point.

5. Indian-Pakistan Talks

The Associated Press ("REDUCING RISK OF CONFLICT TOPS AGENDA OF PAKISTAN, INDIA PMS," Islamabad, 02/18/99) reported that Pakistani Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz said Thursday that the prime ministers of Pakistan and India will try this weekend to find ways to reduce the risk of conflict. Aziz stated, "it is imperative that the two countries evolve a strategic restraint regime in South Asia, that encompasses both the nuclear and conventional fields, in order to reduce the risk of a conflict."

II. Republic of Korea

1. Perry's Visit to Asia

Korea Herald ("PERRY TO VISIT KOREA, JAPAN NEXT MONTH," 02/18/99) reported that William Perry, US policy coordinator on the DPRK, will visit the ROK and Japan again next month to wrap up his DPRK report. "It is very likely that Perry will visit the ROK and Japan again before finalizing his report," said a government official who asked for anonymity. However, the exact date has yet to be fixed. Perry, former US defense secretary, is scheduled to present his DPRK report to US President Bill Clinton by the end of next month. Sources said that Perry might also visit the DPRK this time. A ranking ROK government official said, "The US neither confirms nor denies Perry's DPRK visit, but we do not oppose his visit to the DPRK." The ROK government sent a message to the US saying that Perry should be guaranteed of a meeting with DPRK leader Kim Jong-il before making a decision to visit the DPRK, the official said. Perry's mission in the DPRK would be to collect opinions needed to make the report, not to negotiate with DPRK officials.

2. DPRK Fertilizer Aid

Korea Times ("SEOUL MOVES TO OFFER FERTILIZER TO PYONGYANG," 02/18/99) reported that the ROK government is moving to offer fertilizer to the DPRK in an effort to induce the country to come to the negotiating table with the ROK. Up until now, the Kim Dae-jung administration has maintained the principle that a government-level meeting between the two Koreas should be convened to discuss how to help improve the DPRK's food production. However, the so-called "principle of reciprocity" has brought inter-Korean dialogue to a complete halt for almost a year as the DPRK has refused to meet its ROK counterpart officially. The ROK government has not yet officially announced whether it will shelve the principle, although there is mounting speculation that President Kim will put forward some initiatives in his Sunday "Dialogue with the People." Unification Ministry officials also said that the ROK has not yet decided how and when to offer agricultural aid to the DPRK, even though its basic position is to offer such aid to the DPRK. The ROK's top DPRK policymakers exchanged opinions on the issue Wednesday in a weekly standing committee meeting of the National Security Council. To meet the seeding season when fertilizer is needed to improve agricultural production, officials in the ROK believe that the provision of fertilizer aid to the DPRK should start as early as next month.

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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