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In today's Report:

I. United States

- 1. Hwang Defection
- 2. Four-Party Peace Talks
- 3. Japanese Nuclear Problems
- 4. DPRK Famine Situation

II. Republic of Korea

- 1. Hwang Defection
- 2. Talks On DPRK Nuclear Project
- 3. Britain To Aid DPRK

I. United States

1. Hwang Defection

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government refused to say where or for how long Hwang is expected to stay. The PRC and the ROK confirmed only that Hwang left Beijing, but neither named the destination. The PRC issued a brief dispatch through Xinhua, its official news agency: "China, proceeding from safeguarding the peace and stability on the Korean peninsula, according to Hwang's own will and considering the positions taken by the parties concerned, has sent Hwang out of China's territory for a third country, in accordance with international law and practice." The report was only the second time the PRC's state-run media has mentioned Hwang's defection since the beginning of the incident. A ROK foreign ministry spokesman in Seoul said Hwang was now "in a secure and safe place" with the cooperation of "a third country." Without elaborating, the spokesman said: "He's under our control." The DPRK was silent about Hwang's movements. Philippine President Fidel Ramos had no comment on the matter. A Philippine diplomat, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said other Southeast Asian countries criticized the Philippines for accepting Hwang's visit because it sets a regional precedent for accommodating defectors. The Philippines does not have official relations with the DPRK but maintains cordial ties, and last December sent about US$20,000 in food and medical aid to the DPRK.

US State Department Spokesman Nicholas Burns ("STATE DEPT. NOON BRIEFING, MARCH 18," USIA Transcript, 3/18/97) said that the US is "pleased" that the issue of DPRK defector Hwang Jang-yop "has been resolved peacefully among China, South Korea and North Korea. The Philippine Government has welcomed Mr. Hwang to the Philippines. We think that the basic principle that should have been observed has been observed. If people want to leave a totalitarian society and do so, they ought to be free to continue to where they want to go. That's what happened in this case, and I think it's a very good outcome."

2. Four-Party Peace Talks

US State Department Spokesman Nicholas Burns ("STATE DEPT. NOON BRIEFING, MARCH 18," USIA Transcript, 3/18/97) said that there has been no recent change in the DPRK position on the four-party peace talks proposal. In response to a question regarding the DPRK's current position, Burns said, "I checked just a little while ago, and I'm told that there is no reported progress to date. The United States and South Korea have made a proposal to North Korea. We hope that North Korea will accept it. We're not aware that they have yet accepted it. They have not come back to us to say that." Burns added that it was his understanding that DPRK Vice Minister Kim Gye-gwan left the US Tuesday morning.

3. Japanese Nuclear Problems

The Associated Press (Mari Yamaguchi, "RADIATION EYED IN NUKE ACCIDENT," Tokyo, 3/18/97) reported that officials said on Tuesday that a jump in radiation has been observed far from the damaged nuclear reprocessing plant in Tokaimura, suggesting that the two March 11 fires at the plant spread radiation over a larger area than previously thought. Meteorological officials said today they detected an abnormal increase in the level of cesium -- a byproduct of nuclear fission -- 35 miles southwest of the plant, halfway to Tokyo. Hisato Nishii, a Meteorological Research Institute spokesman, said that cesium levels in the air jumped 10-fold on March 11, compared to the day before the fires and the day after. "We can't think of any other reason for the increase but the plant accident," Nishii said. He added, however, that the level is very low and is not harmful to humans. Officials at the plant have not said how much radiation was released, but have assured nearby residents there was no health danger. The plant, financed by the government and run by the Power Reactor and Nuclear Fuel Development Corp. (Donen), reprocesses nuclear waste to extract plutonium and treat radioactive waste for disposal. The accident has been followed by disclosures of delays in handling the emergency and failures by nuclear officials to properly report the damage at the plant and the release of radiation. On Tuesday, Donen chief Toshiyuki Kondo acknowledged in

Parliament that workers in charge of repair at the plant began a four-day golf tournament on the day of the fires and continued playing despite the emergency. "I am extremely sorry," Kondo said under harsh questioning.

The Associated Press ("JAPAN NUCLEAR WASTE PROTESTED," Rokkasho, Japan, 3/18/97) reported that on Tuesday police scuffled with environmental activists who chained themselves to gates to block trucks carrying 20 tons of high-level radioactive nuclear waste to a storage depot. The waste, which Japan had sent to France for reprocessing, returned by ship today after a troubled two-month journey. Several countries had refused to allow the shipment to pass through their waters. Some 300 demonstrators met the "Pacific Teal" as it brought the waste material to this fishing village, 350 miles northeast of Tokyo. Fifty people sat at the port gates attempting to keep trucks drivers from moving the waste. A shoving match broke out as police cleared away the group, sawing through handcuffs some protesters used to lock themselves to the gates. There were no arrests. The reprocessing provides plutonium for Japan's controversial fast-breeder reactor program. Japan has set 2030 as a goal to develop a commercially viable breeder reactor, which could produce plutonium as part of its reaction process. Other nations, including the United States, Britain and Germany, have abandoned plans for such reactors because of high costs and the dangers of handling the highly radioactive plutonium. The shipments have been denounced as risky due to the prospects of an accidental spill or terrorist attack. "This shipment has caused controversy around the planet and has become a symbol for the environmental, public health and proliferation risks," Hideaki Takemura of Greenpeace Japan said in a statement. Rokkasho officials have accepted the waste on the condition that the town would not permanently store the material without consent from the governor of Aomori prefecture. However, Japan has not yet picked a permanent storage site and the material may remain in Rokkasho for up to 50 years.

4. DPRK Famine Situation

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("NORTH KOREA FACING MAJOR FAMINE - WORLD FOOD PROGRAM," Beijing, 3/18/97) reported that World Food Program director Catherine Bertini said Tuesday that the DPRK's 2.4 million children, many already skeletal after several years of hunger, are threatened with starvation. Bertini said that the World Food Program plans to double its emergency assistance -- and provide food to all North Korean children under age 6 -- in an attempt to stave off a major famine. "The people of North Korea are fast running out of food," she said. "It is the children who are most at risk. Helping them is a matter of urgency." Bertini, recently returned from a three-day visit to Pyongyang and several outlying villages, brought back film footage showing that many children in the schools and nurseries she visited were clearly malnourished, their eyes dull and limbs meager beneath their padded winter clothes. Bertini said that strong government control of the food supply appears to have ensured that rations reach the entire population, but once the nation's food supply runs out in April, all will face famine.

II. Republic of Korea

1. Hwang Defection

The DPRK's 1st-ranking defector and top ideologue, Hwang Jang-yop, arrived in Angeles City in the Philippines Tuesday, on his way to asylum in the ROK after spending a month in the ROK's embassy in Beijing, airport sources said. ROK embassy officials and members of the Philippine military's intelligence service were waiting to greet Hwang at Clark airport as he took his first steps towards a new life in exile since defecting on February 12. Hwang, 74, and the embassy officials were whisked away by Philippine Air Force helicopter to the northern resort city of Baguio after the plane arrived. The PRC and the ROK both confirmed in terse statements that Hwang and his aide Kim Dok-hong had been flown out of Beijing after 35 days stranded inside the ROK consular section. Hwang's

defection had presented Beijing with a delicate balancing act as it tried to resolve the crisis without angering either the DPRK, its former Cold War ally, or the ROK, its new-found trading partner. With Hwang safely off its hands, the PRC's foreign ministry trumpeted Tuesday's outcome saying its traditional friendship with the DPRK remained intact despite the defection. A spokesman for the foreign ministry said, "These relations are mutually beneficial and we have never found that we have to give favors to anyone." Although Philippine President Fidel Ramos could not comment on Hwang's arrival, Philippine Foreign Secretary Domingo Siazon acknowledged that his government had given the go-ahead for Hwang to transit via the Philippines on his way to the ROK. And in a further indication that the crisis was over, DPRK diplomats in Beijing reached by telephone said Hwang was no longer their concern. "You will have to ask the Republic of Korea about Mr. Hwang as he is no longer a North Korean citizen and we do not know what his condition is or where he is," the Beijing-based diplomat said. (Korea Times, "NK DEFECTOR HWANG ARRIVES IN MANILA," 03/18/97)

2. Talks On DPRK Nuclear Project

The first round of working-level negotiations may begin as early as the end of this month concerning construction on DPRK reactors, the ROK Office of Planning for Light-Water Reactors Project said Monday. Officials said a delegation of 20 to 30 people, including officials of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), is to visit Sinpo, the designated site for the reactors, where they will stay about a week to discuss terms for starting construction. The agenda will include communication, travel and lodging arrangements, pay, and supplies for the construction workers and infrastructure improvement, officials said. "This round of negotiations is to confirm the conditions of the selected site and the scope of preparations before hard-core talks begin," an official said, adding that more visits or negotiations in New York will follow. Officials said the working-level negotiations will take time because of wide range of issues, and actual construction will not be able to begin before the latter half of this year. (Korea Herald, "WORKING-LEVEL TALKS ON NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR PROJECT DUE IN LATE MARCH," 03/18/97)

3. Britain To Aid DPRK

The British government has decided to grant 495,000 British pounds (about 742.5 million won) toward the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) appeal for flood victims in the DPRK for the period December 1 1996 to November 30 1997, the British Embassy said yesterday. The embassy said latest reports show that there are no food reserves or funds available for the distribution of food in April to the 139,000 inhabitants of the DPRK who are still dependent on DPRK Red Cross/IFRC assistance. The Overseas Development Administration, a British government aid agency, has decided to make a contribution for the provision of rice, soybeans and vegetable oil to those affected in the month of April. (Korea Herald, "BRITAIN TO GRANT FUND TOWARD IFRC APPEAL FOR NORTH KOREAN FLOOD VICTIMS," 03/18/97)

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.

Produced by the Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development.

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