

# NAPSNet Daily Report 19 May, 1997

---

## Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report 19 May, 1997", NAPSNet Daily Report, May 19, 1997,  
<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-19-may-1997/>

---

In today's Report:

### [I. United States](#)

- [1. DPRK Famine Situation](#)
- [2. US Defense Plans](#)
- [3. ROK Student Protests](#)
- [4. ROK President's Son Under Arrest](#)

### [II. Republic of Korea](#)

- [1. ROK Protests Against USFK](#)
- [2. DPRK Barters With PRC](#)
- [3. ROK-DPRK Red Cross Talks to Resume](#)
- [4. ROK Food Aid to DPRK](#)

## **I. United States**

### **1. DPRK Famine Situation**

The Associated Press ("CHINESE: N. KOREAN KIDS BEG FOOD," Dandong, PRC, 5/19/97) reported that truckers who cross into the DPRK from the PRC every day say that, despite Pyongyang's efforts to hide the extent of food shortages, they experience vivid evidence that North Koreans are dying of hunger. Every morning, trucks laden with food sacks line up for hundreds of yards along the streets of Dandong, just across the Yalu River from the DPRK city of Sinuiju, ready to barter the goods for scrap metal, wood and medicinal herbs that they then bring back to the PRC to sell. Some truckers report that as soon as they cross the China-Korea Friendship Bridge into the DPRK, swarms of hungry children try to loot their cargoes of food. "I've been going across since 1992. Back then, it was really well-ordered. Now -- it's a mess," said one driver, waiting in line to cross the bridge. "They are definitely starving. They all beg for food," he added. "Children, adults, they clamber all over the truck, stealing things. They smash the windows, the lights. Look at the front of my truck -- both lights are smashed," said another driver, who was hauling 10 tons of flour. Drivers also said the North Koreans sometimes throw stones, too -- perhaps to slow the trucks down so they can steal food off the back, or because they are angry that the Chinese appear to be profiting from their

misery. Certainly, in Dandong, attention is focus

In today's Report:

## [I. United States](#)

- [1. DPRK Famine Situation](#)
- [2. US Defense Plans](#)
- [3. ROK Student Protests](#)
- [4. ROK President's Son Under Arrest](#)

## [II. Republic of Korea](#)

- [1. ROK Protests Against USFK](#)
- [2. DPRK Barter With PRC](#)
- [3. ROK-DPRK Red Cross Talks to Resume](#)
- [4. ROK Food Aid to DPRK](#)

### **I. United States**

#### **1. DPRK Famine Situation**

The Associated Press ("CHINESE: N. KOREAN KIDS BEG FOOD," Dandong, PRC, 5/19/97) reported that truckers who cross into the DPRK from the PRC every day say that, despite Pyongyang's efforts to hide the extent of food shortages, they experience vivid evidence that North Koreans are dying of hunger. Every morning, trucks laden with food sacks line up for hundreds of yards along the streets of Dandong, just across the Yalu River from the DPRK city of Sinuiju, ready to barter the goods for scrap metal, wood and medicinal herbs that they then bring back to the PRC to sell. Some truckers report that as soon as they cross the China-Korea Friendship Bridge into the DPRK, swarms of hungry children try to loot their cargoes of food. "I've been going across since 1992. Back then, it was really well-ordered. Now -- it's a mess," said one driver, waiting in line to cross the bridge. "They are definitely starving. They all beg for food," he added. "Children, adults, they clamber all over the truck, stealing things. They smash the windows, the lights. Look at the front of my truck -- both lights are smashed," said another driver, who was hauling 10 tons of flour. Drivers also said the North Koreans sometimes throw stones, too -- perhaps to slow the trucks down so they can steal food off the back, or because they are angry that the Chinese appear to be profiting from their misery. Certainly, in Dandong, attention is focus

### **I. United States**

#### **1. DPRK Famine Situation**

The Associated Press ("CHINESE: N. KOREAN KIDS BEG FOOD," Dandong, PRC, 5/19/97) reported that truckers who cross into the DPRK from the PRC every day say that, despite Pyongyang's efforts to hide the extent of food shortages, they experience vivid evidence that North Koreans are dying of hunger. Every morning, trucks laden with food sacks line up for hundreds of yards along the streets of Dandong, just across the Yalu River from the DPRK city of Sinuiju, ready to barter the goods for scrap metal, wood and medicinal herbs that they then bring back to the PRC to sell. Some truckers report that as soon as they cross the China-Korea Friendship Bridge into the DPRK, swarms of hungry children try to loot their cargoes of food. "I've been going across since 1992. Back then, it was really well-ordered. Now -- it's a mess," said one driver, waiting in line to cross the bridge. "They are definitely starving. They all beg for food," he added. "Children, adults, they clamber all over the truck, stealing things. They smash the windows, the lights. Look at the front of my truck -- both

lights are smashed," said another driver, who was hauling 10 tons of flour. Drivers also said the North Koreans sometimes throw stones, too -- perhaps to slow the trucks down so they can steal food off the back, or because they are angry that the Chinese appear to be profiting from their misery. Certainly, in Dandong, attention is focused on the trade opportunities of the DPRK's dire shortages. The official Dandong Daily said trade between Dandong and the DPRK leapt 110 percent in the first three months of this year compared to the same period in 1996, with exports up 209 percent, to US\$22 million. Smugglers zip across the Yalu River on speedboats to rendezvous with North Koreans who trade copper scrap for cigarettes. One 50-year-old who crosses every night said he also gives the North Koreans free food. "We have to, to keep them alive so they can keep on trading copper with us," he said. [Ed. note: See also "DPRK Barters With PRC" in the ROK section below.]

## **2. US Defense Plans**

The Associated Press ("CLINTON PROPOSES MORE BASE CLOSINGS," Washington, 5/19/97) reported that US Defense Secretary William Cohen on Monday unveiled the Clinton Administration's new plan to revamp the US military. The plan does not envision major cutbacks in spending, currently about US\$250 billion per year. However, Cohen said, the military will "lose weight" by cutting military bases, back-up forces and weapons purchases, shifting resources to front-line preparedness. In particular, the review proposes two more rounds of base closings -- a prospect that Cohen acknowledged enjoys little Congressional support -- to help generate the savings needed to pay for additions or expansions of other programs. Among these, the review proposes to add US\$1 billion over five years for chemical warfare protection, stemming in part from concerns about the DPRK's offensive chemical capability; to add US\$2.3 billion to national missile defense development, nearly doubling the size of the five-year program; and to add US\$1 billion for an Army battlefield digitalization effort. Also, the military will leave intact its commitment to defending the ROK and the Persian Gulf, and maintaining forces sufficient to fight two major regional wars simultaneously. The plan drew criticism from defense analysts who had expected more radical changes. "The world has changed and the Pentagon has not," said John Pike of the Federation of American Scientists, an arms control advocacy group.

## **3. ROK Student Protests**

Reuters ("VIOLENCE MARS MEMORIAL OF SOUTH KOREAN MASSACRE," Seoul, 5/17/97) reported that student violence erupted in the southern ROK city of Kwangju on Friday as residents prepared to mourn victims of a 1980 army massacre in the first officially sponsored anniversary ceremonies. More than 300 students wielding iron bars and hurling Molotov cocktails fought pitched battles with riot police around Chosun University, while the police fired volleys of tear gas to prevent the students from marching into the streets, witnesses said. The rioters were among a crowd of 3,000 students who had massed on the campus for funeral rites to honor a student who died of a heart attack during anti-government protests. Funeral ceremonies were timed to coincide with Sunday's anniversary of the Kwangju massacre of pro-democracy students. This year's anniversary has added significance because the main perpetrators of the killings, former Presidents Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo, are now jailed following convictions on charges of mutiny, treason and corruption. Officially, about 200 people were killed when paratroopers stormed Kwangju in 1980 to put down a revolt against Chun's martial-law rule. Some residents put the death toll as high as 2,000.

## **4. ROK President's Son Under Arrest**

The Associated Press ("S. KOREA PRESIDENT'S SON ARRESTED," Seoul, 5/17/97) reported that Kim Hyun-chul, 37, the second son of ROK President Kim Young-sam, was arrested on bribery and

tax evasion charges Saturday, humiliating his father, who had made fighting corruption a theme of his presidency. The younger Kim was accused of taking US\$3.6 million in bribes from two businessmen seeking his influence. He is also suspected of taking another US\$3.7 million in cash from four businessmen and laundering the money to evade US\$1.5 million in taxes, but prosecutors say they do not yet have evidence that those payments were bribes. Prosecutors say he may have hid as much as US\$16.3 million in more than 100 secret bank accounts -- a practice outlawed by his father's government. Testifying before Parliament in April, he tearfully said he was poor and had not accepted any bribes. The president reportedly had deep trust in his second son, who helped engineer his 1992 election. The elder Kim was quick to apologize for his son's alleged crimes, and urged the nation to put the scandal behind it so as to focus on other national problems, such as an economic slump and relations with rival DPRK. However, the development has further crippled Kim's presidency in his final year in office and damaged his ability to choose his ruling party's candidate to succeed him, with national elections due in December. ROK law restricts presidents to single five-year terms.

## **II. Republic of Korea**

### **1. ROK Protests Against USFK**

Green Korea, a ROK environmental group, yesterday demanded the withdrawal from the ROK of all types of depleted uranium shells possessed by US forces, following the revelation that one such ammunition shell was mistakenly destroyed last February without proper procedures at a military ammunition disposal center in Kyonggi-do. The group said that it is high time for US Forces Korea (USFK) to come clean about what types of radioactive ammunition it has in Korea -- such as the uranium ammunition -- the amounts, and how they have been destroyed thus far. "Korea is a non-nuclear nation that has declared its intention to have nothing to do with nuclear weapons," Green Korea said in a statement. "So we urge USFK to take all nuclear-based weapons from our country immediately." A USFK spokesman was not available for comment. The ongoing brouhaha over the US military's depleted uranium shells, repeating a similar incident in Japan, came to the surface when it was learned that a 120mm depleted uranium shell, used for USFK M1A1 tanks, was mistakenly destroyed with vintage ordinary shells at the Yonchon, Kyonggi-do, bomb disposal site, instead of being shipped to the US for disposal. Although weapons experts said that depleted uranium emits only as much radioactivity as a television screen, the ROK and the US agreed to survey the disposal center and its neighboring areas for any radioactive contamination. The military uses depleted uranium for special shells to destroy tanks and infantry vehicles whose heavy defensive armor are too strong to be penetrated by ordinary shells. Although no cases of radioactive contamination have been reported after the accidental destruction, many environmental groups took up the issue and staged a strong protest against the US military's use of such shells. In Japan, US troops were found to have kept depleted uranium shells at a base there without notifying the Japanese authorities, triggering a public uproar. (Korea Times, "ECO-GROUP PROTEST USFK'S POSSESSION OF DEPLETED URANIUM SHELLS IN KOREA," 05/18/97)

### **2. DPRK Barter With PRC**

The DPRK is scrapping its industrial machinery and equipment to sell it as scrap iron to the PRC in exchange for flour and corn needed to meet the severe food shortages, traders in the PRC said Friday. The traders, for whom bartering PRC food for DPRK scrap iron is a lucrative business, said some 400 trucks per day have been carrying scrap iron from Sinuiju on the DPRK side of the Amnok (Yalu) River to Dandong since last month, twice the rate of earlier in the year. In the PRC, flour and corn are sold for 1,900 yuan (in Renminbi) per ton and scrap iron for 850 yuan per ton, but in barter trade with the DPRK one ton of flour or corn can bring 3.5 tons of DPRK scrap iron, the traders explained. The barter trade of scrap iron for food is allowed to take place between Sinuiju and

Dandong only and the DPRK scrap iron is mostly sent to a rolled steel mill in Tianjin, they said. The DPRK scrap iron is chiefly from obsolete industrial machinery and equipment and partially from military hardware and steel home appliances. The People's Daily, the official newspaper of the PRC communist party, reported Thursday that since the beginning of the year some 1,000 tons of scrap iron per day have been arriving from outside of the country to Dandong. (Korea Times, "N. KOREA BARTERS SCRAP IRON FOR CHINESE FLOUR, CORN," Beijing, 05/18/97)

### **3. ROK-DPRK Red Cross Talks to Resume**

Talks between the two Korean Red Cross organizations will likely resume in Beijing May 23 as the ROK is finding no difficulty accepting a counterproposal made by the DPRK on Saturday. In a telephone message to his ROK counterpart Kang Young-hoon, Ri Song-ho, acting president of the DPRK Red Cross society, accepted Kang's proposal for the resumption of Red Cross talks but insisted that Beijing remain the venue of the talks. Kang, president of the Korea National Red Cross (KNRC), proposed Friday that the ROK and DPRK Red Cross officials hold a second round of talks on aid to the DPRK May 23 in the truce village of Panmunjom, Pyongyang or Seoul. Announcing the proposal, Kang said the ROK is ready to disclose the size of its aid package at the resumed talks. Although somewhat disappointed with the DPRK's continuous adherence to Beijing as the venue, Seoul is certain to accept Pyongyang's proposal, and will give a formal response today. A senior ROK government official said yesterday the issue of venue should not stand in the way of resuming the talks designed to deal with humanitarian aid for starving DPRK citizens. The DPRK's Ri claimed in his message to Kang that there is no need to make things complicated by changing the venue from Beijing to another place. He reiterated Pyongyang's call for Seoul to first specify the size, timing and contents of its aid package. The first round of aid talks stalled due to these DPRK demands as the ROK requested the two sides first settle procedural matters on the direct delivery of grain and other relief goods from the ROK. The KNRC has so far delivered aid packages to the DPRK through the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC). When the Red Cross talks resume, the ROK delegation is expected to repeat its call for Pyongyang to allow southern officials to monitor the distribution of relief goods and expand areas to be covered by the relief assistance. (Korea Herald, "SOUTH, NORTH KOREAS LIKELY TO HOLD RED CROSS TALKS IN BEIJING," 05/19/97)

### **4. ROK Food Aid to DPRK**

Seoul, responding to UN humanitarian appeals, Friday announced it would offer 50,000 tons of corn and 300 tons of powdered milk, worth US\$10 million, to the DPRK. A spokesman for the National Unification Ministry said that the government decided to take part in the UN's humanitarian efforts to help starving DPRK citizens. It is the first time that Seoul decided to offer grain rather than cash to a UN agency. In April, it donated US\$6 million in cash to the World Food Program (WFP), which was used to purchase "corn-soybean blend" for children. According to government statistics, the total amount of the ROK's aid to the DPRK reached US\$245.76 million from September 1995 to April this year. During the same period, the international community, including UN agencies, Red Cross societies, and individual countries, offered aid packages worth US\$166.55 million. On April 15, the US announced its plan to ship US\$15 million worth of food aid to the DPRK to assist children under six who are affected most severely by food shortages. The US decision was timed to precede a meeting in New York between US, ROK and DPRK officials to discuss the proposed four-party peace talks. The ROK government made its recent announcement simultaneously with its overture to hold a Red Cross meeting to discuss private-level grain aid. Seoul had delayed its announcement of grain aid to the DPRK to take into consideration the DPRK's response to the four-party and Red Cross talks. (Korea Times, "SEOUL DECIDES TO OFFER 50,000 TONS OF CORN, 300 TONS OF MILK TO PYONG YANG," Son Key-young, 05/17/97)

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](#).

Wade Huntley: [napsnet@nautilus.org](mailto:napsnet@nautilus.org)  
Berkeley, California, United States

Choi Chung-moon: [cily@star.elim.net](mailto:cily@star.elim.net)  
Seoul, Republic of Korea

Peter Razvin: [icipu@glas.apc.org](mailto:icipu@glas.apc.org)  
Moscow, Russian Federation

Chunsi Wu: [dlshen@fudan.ihep.ac.cn](mailto:dlshen@fudan.ihep.ac.cn)  
Shanghai, People's Republic of China

Dingli Shen: [dlshen@fudan.ihep.ac.cn](mailto:dlshen@fudan.ihep.ac.cn)  
Shanghai, People's Republic of China

Hiroyasu Akutsu: [akutsu@glocomnet.or.jp](mailto:akutsu@glocomnet.or.jp)  
Tokyo, Japan

[Return to the top of this Daily Report](#)

[Go to the Daily Report Archive](#)

[Return to the Nautilus Institute Home Page](#)

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](#).

Wade Huntley: [napsnet@nautilus.org](mailto:napsnet@nautilus.org)  
Berkeley, California, United States

Choi Chung-moon: [cily@star.elim.net](mailto:cily@star.elim.net)  
Seoul, Republic of Korea

Peter Razvin: [icipu@glas.apc.org](mailto:icipu@glas.apc.org)  
Moscow, Russian Federation

Chunsi Wu: [dlshen@fudan.ihep.ac.cn](mailto:dlshen@fudan.ihep.ac.cn)

Shanghai, People's Republic of China

Dingli Shen: [dlshen@fudan.ihep.ac.cn](mailto:dlshen@fudan.ihep.ac.cn)

Shanghai, People's Republic of China

Hiroyasu Akutsu: [akutsu@glocomnet.or.jp](mailto:akutsu@glocomnet.or.jp)

Tokyo, Japan

[Return to the top of this Daily Report](#)

[Go to the Daily Report Archive](#)

[Return to the Nautilus Institute Home Page](#)

---

View this online at: <https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report--9-may-1997/>

Nautilus Institute

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

[nautilus@nautilus.org](mailto:nautilus@nautilus.org)