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I. United States

1. Japan-DPRK Talks

Agence France Presse ("JAPAN, NORTH KOREA HAGGLE OVER HUMANITARIAN ISSUES IN WARM-UP TALKS," Beijing, 12/20/99) and the Associated Press ("JAPAN, NORTH KOREA TALKS DELAYED," Beijing, 12/20/99) reported that Japanese officials said that Japan and the DPRK

disagreed over food aid and other humanitarian issues during preliminary talks on Monday prior to talks on normalizing diplomatic relations. A Japanese delegation source said late Monday that working-level Red Cross and foreign ministry officials from the Japan and the DPRK "have not reached a conclusion up to now." A second round of full-scale talks involving the deputy heads of the Red Cross societies was delayed for hours. Japanese officials said that the DPRK was holding up the high-level meeting without giving any reason. An official in the political section of the DPRK embassy in the Beijing blamed the delay on the Japanese side, saying, "there seems to be something not right in Japan's attitude."

2. Remains of US Soldiers from Korean War

The Associated Press ("N.KOREA LINKS REMAINS SEARCH TO AID," Seoul, 12/20/99), the Washington Post ("U.S. AND N. KOREA TALKS FOUNDER," Berlin, 12/19/99, 50) and Reuters (Charles Aldinger, "U.S. NO ACCORD WITH N.KOREA ON REMAINS SEARCHES," Washington, 12/17/99) reported that US and DPRK negotiators after three day of talks in Berlin failed to agree on December 19 on a schedule for operations next year to recover the remains of US soldiers killed in the Korean War. Alan Liotta, deputy director of the US Defense Department's Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office, said on Monday that the talks were deadlocked because of the DPRK's demand for humanitarian aid, primarily clothing for children. Liotta said, "it's not the authority of the Department of Defense to discuss humanitarian issues." No date was set for the next round of talks. [Ed. note: The Washington Post article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for December 20, 1999.]

The US Department of State Office of International Information Programs ("NORTH KOREAN TALKS END WITHOUT AGREEMENT," Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, 12/17/99) published the following statement: "U.S. and North Korean negotiators ended talks in Berlin late Friday, Dec. 17, 1999 without reaching agreement on joint recoveries of the remains of American servicemen missing in action from the Korean War…. The negotiators discussed ways to continue cooperation on remains recovery operations, but failed to reach an overall agreement as the North Korean side sought to link an extensive humanitarian aid program to the remains recovery operations. The sides set no date for future discussions, but the United States will continue efforts to conclude an agreement consistent with past arrangements."

3. DPRK Engagement Policy

Reuters (Bill Tarrant "WILL NKOREA STRAY FROM ENGAGEMENT POLICY?" Seoul, 12/20/99) reported that ROK President Kim Dae-jung said on December 19 that ties between the ROK and the DPRK should see major improvement in 2000. Kim told the state-run Korean Broadcast Station, "we can expect more changes in inter-Korean relations amid support from our allies like the United States and Japan, reduced tensions and growing cultural exchanges." The article pointed out that analysts generally agree the DPRK likes to keep the situation tense in the region to extract concessions and that the DPRK government is believed to oppose initiatives that would require engagement with the outside world. It added, however, that the DPRK's need for money, food, fuel and basic necessities may cause it to pursue engagement. The article said that Japan, the ROK and the US have, for the first time, been coordinating their approaches to the DPRK with the aim of punishing confrontation and rewarding cooperation. It concluded, "the people-to-people contacts could go a long way toward reducing tensions along the Cold War's last frontier."

4. Macao Handover

Reuters ("CHINA'S JIANG SAYS HAS CONFIDENCE TO SOLVE TAIWAN," Macao, 12/20/99), the Associated Press ("CHINA BEGINS TO REABSORB MACAU, URGES TAIWAN TO RETURN TO THE FOLD," Macau, 12/20/99), the Washington Post (Clay Chandler, "CHINA REGAINS MACAU AFTER 442 YEARS," Macau, 12/20/99, A01), the New York Times (Mark Landler, "PORTUGAL LOWERS ITS FLAG, HANDING MACAO TO CHINA," Macao, 12/20/99) and the Los Angeles Times (Henry Chu, "MACAO RAISES THE CHINESE FLAG AND SIGNALS THE END OF A COLONIAL ERA," Macao, 12/20/99) reported that Macao returned to Chinese rule on Monday. PRC President Jiang Zemin said on Monday at the handover ceremony in Macao, "the Chinese government and its citizens have the confidence and ability to solve the Taiwan issue and realize China's complete reunification." Jiang also said that implementation of the PRC's "one country, two systems" formula for the return of Hong Kong in 1997 and Macao on Monday would help resolve the Taiwan issue.

5. Cross-Straits Relations

The Associated Press (Charles Hutzler, "CHINA SHOWS IMPATIENCE WITH TAIWAN," Beijing, 12/20/99) reported that PRC President Jiang Zemin on Monday warned Taiwan against moving toward outright independence and urged Taiwanese leaders to accept the autonomy formula that allows Hong Kong and Macao to continue their capitalist ways. Jiang said that reunification is "an inevitable historical trend which nobody and no force on earth can ever resist." However, Taiwanese Cabinet-level Mainland Affairs Council said in a statement, "for the people of Taiwan who have long enjoyed freedom and democracy, the idea of imposing 'one country, two systems' on Taiwan is insulting and provocative." Su Ge, a Taiwan specialist at the Foreign Affairs College in Beijing, said that the PRC is trying to bring in international pressure by showing the world that Taiwan is the last step in its reunification and that "the Taiwan issue cannot be put off indefinitely. It cannot remain unresolved indefinitely."

6. Asian Interests in Panama Canal

The New York Times (Larry Rohter, "ASIA MOVES IN ON THE BIG DITCH," Panama, 12/19/99) reported that the US return of the Panama Canal last week showed the growing strategic value of the canal to export-dependent economies in East Asia and its diminishing importance to US commerce and defense. The canal is too small for aircraft carriers and most US companies increasingly prefer overland routes or air freight for shipping goods between the Pacific and the Atlantic. The US remains the largest user of the canal, but China, Japan, the ROK and Taiwan are all among the top ten users. Taiwanese businessman Chang Yung-Fa's Evergree Maritime Corporation manages the port of Colon at the Caribbean entrance and Li Kashing of Hong Kong's Hutchison Whampoa Limited, who is connected to the PRC, manages the port of Balboa at the Pacific entrance. While some US Republicans worry that the PRC will use the control of the Panama Canal to endanger the security of the US, supporters of the turnover note that the US is the only country with a treaty right to intervene should such an unlikely scenario occur. Ricardo Arias Calderon, a former vice president of Panama, said that perhaps the most significant issue developing around the canal was the "intense competition between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China to advance a broad array of interests" that are fundamentally political and economic. Arias continued, "China and Taiwan are already competing in the South China Sea, and now both are seeking a presence at the exit on the side of the Pacific." However, neither Taiwan or the PRC want to supplant the US's role as protector of the canal, so the rivalry has centered on the commercial facilities in and around the canal and on penetrating Latin American markets. Japan is also bidding for influence and profit in the region. It has underwritten a feasibility study for construction of new canal locks, and is offering to finance a new bridge.

7. Japanese Defense Policy

The South China Morning Post (Glenn Schloss, "JAPAN: AIRCRAFT CARRIER 'NEEDED'," Tokyo, 12/20/99) reported that Shingo Nishimura, a former Japanese vice-minister of defense who was forced to resign as after suggesting that Japan consider acquiring an aircraft carrier and nuclear weapons [see Daily Report for October 20], said that he believed the US would back such a move. Nishimura likened Japan to pre-World War II France, which he said failed to heed warnings of Germany's military threat. Nishimura said that the weapons are needed to safeguard sea- lanes between Japan and the Indian Ocean, which are the major transport lines for Japan's oil supply. He also said that he had raised the topic of a nuclear-armed Japan in an attempt to start a serious debate about the nation's future security arrangements, believing the major threat in the next century would come from the PRC and the DPRK. US government sources said they were not aware of any proposal for Japan to acquire an aircraft carrier. [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for December 20, 1999.]

II. Republic of Korea

1. DPRK-Japan Talks

The Korea Herald (Shin Yong-bae, "NORTH KOREA, JAPAN OPEN PRELIMINARY TALKS ON NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS," Seoul, 12/20/99) and The Korea Times ("JAPAN, NORTH KOREA OPEN TALKS FOR WARMER TIES," Seoul, 12/19/99) reported that Japan and the DPRK opened a three-day meeting in Beijing on December 19 to discuss methods for the resumption of diplomatic normalization talks, but officials in the ROK were skeptical about their chances for success. Officials at the ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade said that Red Cross executives from the two nations discussed humanitarian issues on the first day of the talks, including Japan's food aid to the DPRK and its alleged kidnapping of Japanese citizens. After the Red Cross talks are concluded, senior foreign ministry officials from Japan and the DPRK are scheduled to meet to discuss arrangements for rapprochement talks between the two countries. An ROK official said, "we expect that the outcome of the ongoing Red Cross meeting will affect the government-level preliminary talks."

2. DPRK-US Talks

The Korea Herald (Shin Yong-bae, "SEOUL, WASHINGTON SEE HIGH-LEVEL TALKS BETWEEN N. KOREA, U.S. IN NEW YEAR," 12/18/99) reported that ROK officials said that the ROK and the US agreed on December 17 that despite apparent obstacles, high-level talks between the DPRK and the US will take place. After meeting with US special envoy on Korean affairs Charles Kartman, ROK Deputy Foreign Minister Jang Jai-ryong said, "we reached a consensus that the North's positive attitude toward the high-level talks has not changed." Jang also quoted Kartman as saying that the US believes there is no reason for the DPRK to reject talks because the meeting will be profitable for them. Jang said that he expects another round of preliminary talks between Kartman and DPRK Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye-gwan will be held next month to arrange a high-level meeting. Jang said that he and Kartman also discussed the future course of US action when talks with the DPRK were concluded. He stated, "in the course of consultations over future developments in Washington-Pyongyang relations, we also reaffirmed our close cooperation in the development of strategies on the North." Jang and Kartman also agreed to resume the four-way peace talks as soon as possible.

3. Four-Party Talks

The Korea Times (Son Key-young, "4-PARTY MEETING TO BE POSTPONED DUE TO US-NK TALKS," Seoul, 12/17/99) reported that an ROK Foreign Affairs-Trade Ministry official said on December 16 that the ROK and the US share the view that the reopening of four-party peace talks should be put off until the DPRK and the US make progress in bilateral talks. "It is unlikely that North Korea would come to the negotiating table of four-party talks unless there is progress in its talks with the United States," the official said in a briefing on a visit to the ROK by US special envoy for Korean peace talks Charles Kartman.

4. Light-Water Reactor Project

The Korea Times ("GOV'T DENIES AID FOR NK CONSTRUCTION OF POWER TRANSMITTER," Seoul, 12/16/99) reported that the ROK government on December 15 denied press reports that the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) would provide financial assistance for the construction of an electricity transmission and distribution system in the DPRK. The article noted that the construction and improvement of an electricity transmission and distribution system are prerequisites for the successful operation of the two light-water nuclear power plants being built by KEDO in the DPRK. The official also said that KEDO is ready to help the DPRK attract commercial loans from foreign financial institutions.

5. DPRK Policy toward ROK

The Korea Herald (Kim Ji-ho, "N. KOREA WARY OF SEOUL'S PUSH FOR INTER-KOREAN EXCHANGES," Seoul, 12/18/99) reported that ROK observers said on December 17 that the DPRK appears to be backing away from previous agreements on multiple private level inter-Korean exchanges because of its concern over "excessive exposure" of its people to capitalist culture. Several ROK promoters received permission from the DPRK last month to stage inter-Korean cultural events, raising expectations for an unprecedented series of exchanges between the rival Koreas in the last month of the 20th century. The DPRK, however, has since appeared hesitant to implement the agreements and has withheld the invitations needed by ROK citizens to attend events in the DPRK.

6. DPRK Espionage

Chosun Ilbo (Jung Kwon-hyun, "DEFECTOR TELLS OF NK ESPIONAGE COUPS," Seoul, 12/16/99) reported that ROK military uniform cloth obtained from an ROK businessman in early 1994 was used in camouflage uniforms for DPRK special forces, espionage agents and sniper squads. Choi Joo-hal, who served as a colonel in the DPRK, revealed some incidents of the military gaining equipment and related materials through espionage activities abroad in his column in the December edition of "Mang Hyang," a monthly bulletin for DPRK defectors living in the ROK. According to Choi, military representatives to Russia in 1993 brought cluster bomblets back to the DPRK while a colonel, Choi Choon-seok, in Germany got blueprints of the MIG-23 fighter during German unification. The DPRK also obtained business instruction statements sent from the ROK Military of National Defense to overseas military officers in the early 80s and hydrographic charts of the East, West and South seas from Russia. Choi added that agents stole the T-60 type tank blueprints from Syria in the late 1970s and developed its own version, the "Chon Ma Ho."

7. Y2K Preparation in DPRK

The Korea Times ("P'YANG SAID LACKING TECHNOLOGY TO FIX Y2K GLITCH IN MILITARY," Seoul, 12/17/99) reported that an ROK defense researcher said on December 16 that the DPRK is believed to be lacking technology to fix the Y2K computer problem, sparking fears of an accidental missile launch. Dr. Lee Jae-wook, a senior researcher at the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses (KIDA), claimed in a report this week that the ROK and the DPRK could engage in inadvertent armed conflicts due to the general unpreparedness of the DPRK regime for the Y2K phenomenon. He questioned the DPRK's Y2K preparedness on sophisticated weapons such as the Rodong and Taepodong missiles. An ROK Ministry of Information and Communication official said that the DPRK lacks the capability to fix the computer problem because most defense firms in the former Soviet Union have been closed or transformed into civilian plants. Lee said that the DPRK weapons will be affected by the Y2K problem.

8. Report of Malaria in DPRK

Chosun Ilbo (Jung Kwon-hyu, "NK REPORTS 100,000 MALARIA CASES," Seoul, 12/16/99) reported that, according to a report dated December 9 and released by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) on December 16, the number of people suffering from malaria in the DPRK has reached about 100,000. The report is posted on the "appeals and situation report" page of the IFRC website. The IFRC based its report on the DPRK Ministry of Public Health, which stated that a total of 100,000 cases of malaria occurred in the DPRK this year and that all observed cases were caused by P.Vavax (plasmodium vivax). The report also detailed the World Health Organization warning which stated that the DPRK is at the stage where the country's number of tuberculosis (TB) cases has "reached epidemic levels." The IFRC added three new sections on malaria, DOTS (Directly Observed Treatment Short-course), and vaccination schemes in their new drug manual for next year.

9. DPRK Political System

The Korea Herald (Lee Ha-won, "NORTH KOREA CATEGORIZED AS A TOTALITARIAN STATE," Seoul, 12/19/99) reported that Freedom House, a US civil rights group, revealed on December 19 that it had categorized the DPRK as one of the last five remaining totalitarian states in its recently published "Report on the Global Political Structure of the 20th Century." The DPRK was also listed as the only state where the regime has not changed in the past 50 years. The report stated that the 20th century could be referred to as the "democratic century," citing that since the 1950s the number of democratic states has risen from 22 to 119.

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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