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# NAPSNet Daily Report 20 May, 1997

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## **I. United States**

### **1. ROK-DPRK Red Cross Talks**

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("RED CROSS OFFICIALS OF BOTH KOREAS TO MEET IN BEIJING FRI," Seoul, 5/20/97) reported that Kang Young-hoon, head of the ROK Red Cross, said on Tuesday that his organization had accepted the counterproposal of its DPRK counterpart to meet in Beijing Friday to discuss food aid. Red Cross officials of the two Koreas met in Beijing earlier this month for the first time in nearly five years, but failed to agree on procedures to deliver food aid. The ROK Red Cross subsequently announced its willingness to accommodate a DPRK demand that it indicate the amount of food aid it was prepared to deliver, and proposed last week that both sides meet at the border or in either of the two capitals, Seoul or Pyongyang, on Friday. The DPRK Red Cross agreed to the meeting date but insisted that the contact take place again in Beijing. "I do not understand and rather regret why you insist on Beijing as a venue instead of our land, which is more convenient," Kang said in a telephone message to his counterpart, Li Sung-ho. The ROK Red Cross will propose giving the DPRK about 50,000 tons of grain worth about US\$10 million, donated by private aid groups. The ROK Red Cross will also propose that those donations be delivered by land and be marked with the donors' names, suggestions the DPRK has opposed in the past.

### **2. US View of PRC Threat**

The AP-Dow Jones News

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### **I. United States**

#### **1. ROK-DPRK Red Cross Talks**

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## **2. US View of PRC Threat**

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("U.S. COMMANDER DOWNPLAYS CHINA THREAT TO ASIA STABILITY," Singapore, 5/20/97) reported that Admiral Joseph Prueher, the commander of US forces in the Pacific, said Tuesday that the US does not regard the PRC as a threat to Asian stability, despite its growing arms purchases and territorial disputes with its neighbors. Prueher also downplayed fears of the PRC's expanding military power and possible conflicts with Taiwan or with its neighbors over control of the South China Sea. Even by exerting maximum effort, "it would be a decade and a half, or two, before they could get to a large power projection capability," Prueher said in an interview with a group of reporters while on a tour of Asia, including stops in Australia, the Philippines, Thailand and Hong Kong. Prueher's trip coincides with the release of the Defense Department's Quadrennial Defense Review, which outlines the government's intentions to make the US military smaller but more technologically powerful. [Ed. note: See "US Defense Plans" in the May 19 Daily Report.] Prueher emphasized that the review will result in about 100,000 US military personnel remaining in Asia, mainly in Japan and the ROK. "It should send a signal of great reassurance to the Asia-Pacific region," he said.

## **3. Assessment of US Policy Toward DPRK**

Michael Dobbs, in a news analysis in The Washington Post ("NORTH KOREA POLICY CONFOUNDS U.S.," 5/20/97, A11) wrote that the DPRK's continuing military threats and growing economic and food crises, combined with the recent breakdown of diplomatic negotiations with the US, have increased speculation regarding scenarios of DPRK collapse, and also increased criticism of the Clinton administration's handling of the situation. "Nobody can rule out a violent implosion of the North Korean regime, releasing a flood of frantic refugees across the border to South Korea and China," Dobbs wrote. "Such dire scenarios have led some Korean experts to ask whether the United States should adopt a bolder, more comprehensive strategy toward the Pyongyang regime than the cautious approach now being pursued by the Clinton administration." Dobbs quoted former State Department official Robert Manning as saying that the recent breakdown of US-DPRK talks bodes ill. "There are signs that the North Korean military could do something desperate. They sent the Foreign Ministry people out to get food, and they came back with the equivalent of a Big Mac and an order of fries," Manning said. At the same time, Dobbs also quoted Selig Harrison of the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington as saying that DPRK officials have told him that, despite the US refusal to link food aid to DPRK acceptance of peace talks, they might now be ready for an even broader "food for peace" deal with the US, including military pullbacks from the demilitarized zone (DMZ). "This is a very serious feeler to see if we are willing to shift from our present strategy of focusing solely on the peace talks to a new strategy of broader negotiations," Dobbs quoted Harrison as saying. Dobbs noted that Clinton administration officials are skeptical of such "feelers," which have not been made directly to US officials. However, Dobbs also noted that, in the view of critics like Harrison and Manning, neither Washington nor Seoul has exhibited "bold political leadership" in handling the DPRK. In particular, the Clinton administration has yet to appoint an assistant secretary of state for Asia or to fill other key diplomatic posts in Asia, and has left the task of coordinating Korea policy to middle-ranking officials. Clinton administration officials concede the need for more high-level attention on the DPRK, but say it would be wrong to switch strategies in midstream by dangling an explicit "food for peace" bargain in front of Pyongyang. "The North Koreans understand that the peace talks are an umbrella under which all sorts of things could occur," Dobbs quoted a State Department official as saying. "They have been defined very broadly to

include economic issues. The idea of a grand bargain is implicit in the invitation [to Pyongyang] to sit down for peace talks."

#### **4. US Government Secrecy Reviewed**

Eleanor Randolph, in an analysis article in the Los Angeles Times ("IS U.S. KEEPING TOO MANY SECRETS?," New York, 5/17/97), wrote that a number of politicians, historians and journalists believe that excessive US government secrecy promotes public beliefs in conspiracy theories. Some US Congressional representatives are seeking legislation to alleviate the problem. "This is not a good situation. If everything's secret, then people think 'What are they keeping from us?' It's very unhealthy for a large proportion of the population to think that the government itself might be the enemy," says Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.), chairman of the high-powered US Commission on Protecting and Reducing Secrecy and one of the bi-partisan group of sponsors of the Government Secrecy Act of 1997, intended to encourage the government to stamp fewer documents secret and to declassify more files for public use. Although most US citizens acknowledge that the government needs to keep some secrets (primarily to preserve national security), the end of the Cold War has increased the pressure on Congress and the federal bureaucracy to end what Moynihan calls the "ultimate form of government regulation -- government secrecy." Unofficial estimates are that the US government holds between two and ten billion pages of secret documents, many of which are more than 25 years old. Officially, in 1995 US government officials made 3.6 million decisions to classify some or all of a document -- an average of nearly 10,000 new secrets each day. The Defense Department and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) account for 80 percent of this secrecy. In 1995, President Clinton issued an order attempting to clear a secrecy backlog built up during the Reagan Administration, resulting in declassification of more than 57 million documents. Even more declassification is expected to be reported for 1996. However, many complain that the system for getting documents released from the government, set up under the now thirty-year-old Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), is at best cumbersome and often simply unworkable, seldom producing timely or even usable information. The Defense Department, State Department and CIA can take years to respond to FOIA requests. The resistance not only promotes beliefs in government conspiracies, but also prompts journalists to get their information via leaks. "The utility of the FOIA is declining quite steadily, and at the same time, the frequency of leaks has been increasing," said Steven Aftergood, director of the Project on Government Secrecy at the Federation of American Scientists in Washington.

#### **5. US State Opposes Nuclear Shipments**

United Press International ("LAWMAKERS OPPOSE NUCLEAR SHIPMENTS," Sacramento, Calif., 5/20/97) reported that the California state Assembly passed a resolution, on a vote of 56-3, declaring the state's opposition to the shipment of nuclear waste through San Francisco Bay and northern California by the US government. Assemblywoman Carole Migden (D-San Francisco) said the resolution is intended to send a message to the US Department of Energy, which plans five shipments of radioactive nuclear rods beginning next year. Migden said the shipments, ultimately destined for Idaho, would be over land vulnerable to earthquakes and would threaten the lives of more than 8 million people. Supporters of the resolution suggested that it might eventually include a suggestion that the shipments be diverted to Bremerton, Wash., or Charleston, S.C., which already receive nuclear waste. Energy Department officials say cargoes of spent nuclear fuel won't hurt the bay, and that they would be transported by rail at only 35 miles-per-hour. The nuclear fuel rods are from foreign countries whose power plants were supplied by the US in exchange for promises not to develop nuclear weapons.

## **II. Republic of Korea**

## **1. ROK Aid to DPRK**

ROK Deputy Premier and National Unification Minister Kwon O-kie yesterday told ROK President Kim Young-sam that his ministry will make efforts to offer humanitarian aid to the DPRK in a "streamlined and effective" manner. In a briefing at Chong Wa Dae following his recent visit to Japan, Kwon reportedly said that the North would face serious food shortages starting in July, when the North's rice reserves are expected to be depleted, until the autumn harvest season. Kwon said that his ministry would accept the North's counterproposal to hold inter-Korean Red Cross talks in Beijing on May 23 and will convey its decision soon to the DPRK side through a Red Cross hot line. When Red Cross talks resume in Beijing, Seoul is expected to call on Pyongyang to diversify transportation routes (including adding a ground route passing through Panmunjom), to increase distribution areas, to allow ROK Red Cross officials to monitor the distribution process, and to allow the KNRC logo to be printed on the aid packages. Regarding the North's demand that Seoul first specify the size of its aid packages and the timetable for the shipment, Kwon reportedly said that the ROK Red Cross society is able to ship tens of thousands of tons of grain in the next several months. The level of Seoul's humanitarian aid is unlikely to meet the North's expectations, but it is still too early to judge how Pyongyang will react to Seoul's aid plan. In the past, the ROK Red Cross society has sent humanitarian aid packages via the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) because there was no direct channel for aid deliveries. So far, IFRC has offered aid packages worth US\$13 million on three occasions since 1995. (Korea Times, "SEOUL TO ENSURE 'EFFECTIVE' GRAIN AID TO NK: DPM KWON," 05/20/97)

## **2. DPRK-Taiwan Nuclear Waste Deal**

The ROK and the PRC have agreed to mount a combined effort to stop Taiwan's plan to ship radioactive waste to the DPRK, officials in the ROK said yesterday. In a meeting in Beijing, ROK Foreign Minister Yoo Chong-ha and his PRC counterpart Qian Qichen agreed that Taiwan's plan should be immediately stopped as it could be hazardous to the environment and security of Northeast Asia as well as to the Korean peninsula. Seoul has made diplomatic efforts to abort Taiwan's plan to ship up to 200,000 tons of nuclear waste to the DPRK, saying it has a right to intervene because the Korean peninsula is one ecosystem. Meanwhile, the PRC has regarded it as inappropriate for Taiwan to contact the DPRK for such purposes because it contradicts its "one-China" policy. Yoo's official visit marks the fifth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the ROK and the PRC. The two foreign ministers expressed satisfaction over the speedy improvement of bilateral exchanges. Meanwhile, the PRC reaffirmed that it would take part in the proposed four-party talks and play "constructive, positive roles" to ensure peace and security on the Korean peninsula. However, Minister Qian stressed that countries involved should first reach a consensus on the realization of the four-party talks. The two sides also shared the view that the ROK and the DPRK should step up exchanges because inter-Korean problems should be resolved directly between the ROK and the DPRK. The two foreign ministers also agreed to sign a fishing agreement in line with the Declaration of the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) in waters around the Korean peninsula. They concluded that they should set maritime boundaries for their EEZs in accordance with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and the spirit of cooperation between the two countries. Yoo and Qian also exchanged views on international issues. The ROK foreign minister noted that it was crucial for the PRC to improve its relations with the US for peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. Yoo also hopes to maintain cooperative relations between Korea and Hong Kong, even after the PRC takes over the British territory in July. (Korea Times, "SEOUL, BEIJING AGREE ON JOINT EFFORT TO STOP TAIWAN'S SHIPMENT OF N-WASTE TO NK," 05/20/97)

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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