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I. United States

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1. Sinking of DPRK Submarine

The Associated Press (Sang-hun Choe, "POISON CITED IN KOREA SPY BOAT BODY," Seoul, 12/19/98) reported that ROK Defense Ministry officials said Saturday that military investigators found traces of poison in a body recovered from a suspected DPRK spy boat sunk by the ROK navy. The officials said that the finding indicated that some of the boat's crewmen may have killed themselves before their vessel was sunk on Friday. Lieutenant Colonel Lee Woon-se, a ministry spokesman, stated, "We found evidence that the man bit an ampoule of poison. We also found injuries from gun shrapnel." He added that DPRK agents were trained to commit suicide before being caught by ROK troops. ROK President Kim Dae-jung's office said that the incident would not derail its policy towards the DPRK.

The Associated Press ("S KOREA WANTS APOLOGY FROM N KOREA Seoul, 12/19/98) reported that the ROK Defense Ministry in a statement on Saturday demanded that the DPRK apologize for sending a spy boat into ROK waters. The statement said, "We are shocked and enraged by the North's continued provocative infiltrations. We demand the North offer a responsible and convincing explanation." It added that the UN Command would demand talks with DPRK generals at Panmunjom to protest the incursion.

Reuters (Yoo Choon-sik, "N.KOREA DENIES IT SENT VESSEL TO THE SOUTH," Seoul, 12/19/98) reported that the DPRK official Korean Central News Agency quoted a spokesman for the semi-governmental Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland as saying on Saturday that the DPRK had nothing to do with a vessel sunk by ROK forces. The spokesman stated, "The incidents have nothing to do with the North. We can no longer remain a passive onlooker to the South Korean puppets' continuous anti-communist campaign and slander against the North. The campaign can convince no one. We will take resolute measures so that the provokers may drink a bitter cup."

US State Department Spokesman Jamie Rubin ("STATE DEPARTMENT NOON BRIEFING, DECEMBER 18, 1998," USIA Transcript, 12/18/98) said that the US deplores the latest DPRK attempt at submarine infiltration. Rubin stated, "We are consulting closely with South Korea. This incident highlights the need for tension reduction and confidence-building measures on the Korean Peninsula, as the President of South Korea and President Clinton have called for." He added, "We will continue our various efforts to resolve our concerns through bilateral dialogue with North Korea and through the four-party talks."

The Associated Press (Paul Shin, "SOUTH KOREA HUNTS FOR N. KOREA SHIP," Seoul, 12/18/98) reported that ROK navy ships and planes on Friday began a sea and air search for the ship that launched the DPRK boat that was sunk by the ROK military. Lieutenant General Chung Young-jin, commander of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Operations Headquarters, stated, "We're now involved in reconnaissance operations to pursue the mother ship, which is believed to be outside South Korean territorial waters." Chung said four men had been seen on the boat, and Navy frogmen were searching for more bodies. He added, "The speedboat is believed to have been dispatched to infiltrate agents into the South, pick up agents stationed in the South, or establish secret, espionage-related drop-off points." He said it was believed to have been launched by a ship weighing up to 100 tons and sailing out of the port of Nampo on the DPRK's west coast. On shore, ROK soldiers and police were placed on high alert, increasing security checks for possible infiltrators.

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2. ROK-Japan Maritime Incident

The Associated Press ("S.KOREA WARSHIP FIRES WARNING SHOTS, Tokyo, 12/21/98) reported that Japanese coast guard spokesman Shinji Sezaki said that an ROK warship fired warning shots Monday near a Japanese boat fishing for tuna in international waters between the two countries. Sezaki said that several shots landed about 330 feet from the vessel, but the pilot was unhurt. He noted that the incident occurred about six miles east of the site where ROK navy ships sank a DPRK speedboat on Friday. An ROK coast guard spokesman, identified only as Lieutenant Colonel Kim, would not say if the fishing boat was confused for such a ship. Kim said the warship fired the warning shots after the ship's pilot failed to respond to warnings to leave the area. The Japanese coast guard warned Japanese fishing boats to be careful in their operations in the Korean Straight.

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3. Alleged DPRK Military Construction

The Associated Press ("REPORT: NORTH KOREA IN ARMS BUILDUP," Tokyo, 12/19/98) reported that Japan's Kyodo News agency said Saturday that Japan believes that the DPRK has three suspected nuclear weapons development facilities and has begun construction of new missile launch sites. A Defense Agency report described one of two new missile sites as being near the northern border with the PRC and the other as near the southern border with the ROK. The three nuclear-related sites cited by the agency include a nuclear reprocessing facility in Kumchangri, a trigger device testing compound in Kwisong, and an underground facility in Taechon, although it was unclear whether the underground sites at Kwisong and Kumchangri were separate facilities or different names for the same facility. However, the agency reported no signs that the DPRK has begun preparations for a new missile launch.

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4. DPRK Food Aid

("NORTH KOREA OFFERS THANKS FOR FOOD," Seoul, 12/21/98) reported that the DPRK's Flood Damage Rehabilitation Committee on Monday thanked the UN and other donors for continuing to help feed its people. The Committee stated, "We are grateful to the United Nations, international organizations, countries and individual groups for continuously rendering food, farming materials, (medicines) and other materials out of noble humanitarianism."

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5. PRC-Taiwan Relations

The Associated Press ("TAIWAN LEADER MAY MEET WITH ZEMIN," Tokyo, 12/20/98) reported that Japan's Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper on Saturday quoted Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui as saying that he would eventually like to meet PRC President Jiang Zemin when the timing is right. Lee did not give details, but suggested a meeting might be possible during the annual summit of leaders from the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. However, Lee added that a bilateral meeting with Jiang at APEC was unlikely as long as the PRC continues to protest Lee's presence at the summit.

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6. PRC Dissident's Visit to Taiwan

The Associated Press (Christopher Bodeen, "CHINESE DISSIDENT TO VISIT TAIWAN," Taipei, 12/20/98) reported that exiled Chinese dissident Wei Jingsheng would travel to Taiwan on Monday to meet with top officials, including President Lee Teng-hui. Wei will also meet with heads of the opposition Democratic Progressive Party and the New Party. The United Daily News on Sunday quoted Wei as saying that Taiwan's democracy is a threat to the PRC, which will not pass up an opportunity to "eat up the island." He added that the best way to ensure Taiwan's security is to aid the PRC's democracy movement. During his trip, Wei may also visit a human rights memorial near a former prison on remote Green Island where political prisoners were confined and sometimes executed during nearly four decades of martial law.

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7. Taiwanese Elections

The Los Angeles Times carried an opinion article by Daniel C. Lynch, Assistant Professor of International Relations at the University of Southern California ("DO NOT FEAR DEMOCRACY IN TAIWAN, 12/21/98) which argued against the view that Taiwan democracy threatens to destabilize world politics by leading to a referendum on Taiwanese independence. The author argued, "Taiwan's democratization is in fact a force for stability in cross-strait relations that helps ensure that the island's leaders will not take rash actions that threaten regional security. In the past three years, Taiwan's democracy has matured to the point that a genuine consensus has developed around the notion that it would be dangerous and even foolish to declare independence." He added, "it is precisely democratization, including increasing media freedoms that facilitate debate, that allows this consensus to develop and take root." He noted, "the radical liberalization of the media now forces independence supporters to debate objectively among themselves and with KMT supporters just how wise such a course would be." He concluded, "The days of high- stakes brinkmanship in Taiwan politics are over. The people speak almost daily through polls, letters to the editor and radio and television call- in shows, and they express a consistent desire for maintaining the status quo. No Taiwan politician can afford to ignore this sentiment. No one in Washington or Beijing need fear Taiwan democracy."

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8. Taiwanese Toxic Waste Export

Reuters ("CAMBODIAN PORT CALM AFTER VIOLENT WASTE PROTESTS," Sihanoukville, 12/20/98) reported that at least one person was killed on Sunday during violent protests in Cambodia's port city of Sihanoukville against suspected toxic waste dumped near the city by the Taiwanese firm Formosa Plastics. Cambodian officials said on Monday that 30 Sihanoukville customs, port, and local police officials, including their chiefs, had been suspended as investigations continued into the waste shipment. A technical expert from the UN was due to arrive in Cambodia on Monday to help analyze the suspect material. The waste is believed by local environmental inspectors to be compressed ash from an industrial waste incinerator and to also contain hazardous material such as lead, zinc, and mercury. Health Minister Mam Bunheng had said the deaths of at least two local residents and five cases of dizziness appeared connected to their involvement in movement of the waste. Formosa Plastics has said the material is industrial waste with traces of mercury, but had been certified by Taiwan's Environmental Protection Administration as being well below hazardous levels and safe for landfill disposal. Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen has said the waste must be sent back to Taiwan immediately and appealed for international assistance to resolve the problem.

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9. PRC Environmental Movement

The Associated Press (John Leicester, "BUDDING ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT IS PLANTING SEEDS OF A 'GREEN' CHINA," Beijing, 12/20/98) reported that a small band of environmental activists in the PRC have been allowed to form groups and campaign publicly, as long as they refrain from attacking government policies. The article said that the environmental movement is part of a nascent civil society in the PRC that includes women's groups and public health campaigners. It added that environmental groups' focus on recycling dovetails with government efforts to make people more environmentally aware and to promote sustainable development. Liang Congjie, head of the Friends of Nature group, said that government officials have realized that "we help them achieve many things." Liang added, "We know where the limitations are. We try to avoid the politics as much as we can, just focus on environmental issues." However, Dai Qing, author of a banned book attacking the Three Gorges Dam, said that official restrictions limit the effectiveness of the movement. Dai stated, "Without [the groups], the hopes of changing the environmental consciousness of the Chinese people would be even smaller than they are now, but they have not yet played the big role we would like."

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10. US-Pakistan Fighter Dispute

The Associated Press ("PAKISTAN SAYS F-16 DISPUTE RESOLVED," Islamabad, 12/19/98) reported that Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said Saturday that Pakistan's dispute with the US over the purchase of 28 F-16 fighter planes has been resolved. Pakistan will get US$467 million from the US, the outstanding amount it paid for the fighter planes it never received. Earlier, Pakistan had received US$157 million as partial repayment. Sharif stated, "The F-16s issue has been a long-standing and a persistent irritant in our bilateral relations with the United States. I am delighted that this issue has been satisfactorily settled." He said that the repayment will be divided into a US$327 million cash payment before the end of December and a US$140 million payment in wheat and other commodities over the next two years.

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11. Indian-Russian Defense Pact

Reuters ("INDIA, RUSSIA TO SEAL DEFENSE PACT IN PRIMAKOV TRIP," New Delhi, 12/19/98) reported that Indian officials said on Saturday that India and Russia will sign a number of agreements during a visit of Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov starting Sunday, including a new pact on long-term military cooperation. An unnamed Indian foreign ministry official said that the new defense agreement would build on and extend an existing defense cooperation pact to 2010. He declined to specify the areas of military collaboration but said that "anything between 45 percent to 80 percent" of Indian military equipment was of Soviet origin. Defense analysts said the agreement was largely aimed at ensuring a smooth supply of military spare parts to the Indian armed forces.

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12. Russian Ratification of START II

Agence France Presse ("OUTRAGED RUSSIA BINS NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT TREATY, RECALLS US AMBASSADOR," Moscow, 12/18/98) reported that Russian lawmakers on Thursday postponed ratification of the START II nuclear disarmament treaty in protest over US air strikes on Iraq. Duma

speaker Gennady Zyuganov said that his Communist Party and its allies would vote down moves to put START II on the day's agenda.

RFE/RL Newsline ("START-II RATIFICATION SWITCHES TO INDEFINITE HOLD," 12/18/98) reported that various Russian politicians said that the ratification of START II is likely to be delayed for at least another six months. Presidential spokesman Dmitrii Yakushkin said on Friday that chances for ratification have "really faded." A spokesman for First Deputy Prime Minister Yurii Maslyukov said that although the treaty should still be ratified, it would be inappropriate to do so while air strikes on Iraq are occurring.

II. Republic of Korea

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1. DPRK Alleged Underground Facility

Korea Herald ("ROK, JAPAN, U.S. TO DISCUSS KUMCHANGNI SITE," Seoul, 12/21/98) reported that the ROK, the US, and Japan are scheduled to meet Tuesday to discuss the suspect underground facility under construction in the DPRK. At the talks to be held in New York, the three countries will review the two rounds of talks between the US and the DPRK and the US demand for access to what is alleged to be a nuclear facility in Kumchangri. At the upcoming New York talks, the ROK, the US, and Japan are expected to discuss the easing of US economic sanctions on the DPRK and the provision of food aid to the DPRK.

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2. DPRK Defectors in PRC

Chosun Ilbo ("PRC DEPORTS 150 DPRK DEFECTORS," Seoul, 12/21/98) reported that the PRC's Public Security Authority held mass detentions in Tunghwa, Jiling Province last Wednesday, arresting 150 DPRK defectors whom they deported back to the DPRK. The Citizens Union for Human Rights in North Korea (CUHRNK) claimed that ROK and Japanese tourists reported the incident and said they witnessed children among the group. Police apparently searched the houses of ethnic Korean-Chinese and, having rounded up the group, deported them on a train at 10:30 am. The organization commented that there had been isolated incidents of deporting DPRK defectors, but this was the first time such a large group had been returned. CUHRNK sent letters to PRC President Jiang Zemin and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees calling for DPRK defectors to be treated as asylum seekers and as such not to be repatriated.

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3. UNICEF Aid to DPRK

JoongAng Ilbo ("UNICEF TO GIVE 4.7 MILLION DOLLARS IN AID TO DPRK," Seoul, 12/21/98) reported that the ROK Ministry of Unification (MOU) announced on December 21 that UNICEF plans to give US$4.7 million to the DPRK over two years beginning in 1999. A source at the MOU said, "UNICEF and the DPRK signed an agreement and worked out a schedule plan on December 18 in Pyongyang. This plan aims to provide support for infants and pregnant women. It will also provide food and other provisions for public nurseries and orphanages, and improve environmental conditions overall for infants." UNICEF's support will concentrate on solving the chronic malnutrition and incomplete development of children in the DPRK.

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4. DPRK Cultural Imports to ROK

JoongAng Ilbo ("GOVERNMENT TO APPROVE THE SALE OF DPRK'S MOVIES AND VIDEOS," Seoul, 12/20/98) reported that the ROK government will approve commercial sales of movies and videos made by the DPRK, beginning in January 1999. A source at the Agency for National Security Planning announced on December 20, "The government will initially open up non- political fields like culture, art, and tourism." The source also said, "The Agency already concluded consultations at the executive level with the Ministry of Unification and Culture and Tourism. The government has already approved the sale of Mt. Kumgang tour video tapes." Accordingly, broadcasting companies and even ordinary citizens can import movies and videos from DPRK once they notify the government.

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5. Confidence Vote for ROK Minister of Defense

Chosun Ilbo ("DEFENSE MINISTER SURVIVES NO CONFIDENCE VOTE," Seoul, 12/21/98) reported that ROK Minister of Defense Chon Yong-taek narrowly survived a no confidence vote in the National Assembly Monday over his handling of recent incidents involving the military. With 275 lawmakers present, 135 voted in favor of dismissal and 135 against, with 1 abstention and 1 spoiled paper, falling short of the 150 votes needed to force his resignation. Analysts said that at least four ruling party assembly men must have voted against Chon, amid opposition calls that he still resign as he had no clear mandate.

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6. ROK Election Scandal

Korea Herald ("CHANG CLAIMS HE DELIVERED LETTER FROM PRESIDENT KIM TO DPRK," Seoul, 12/21/98) reported that Chang Sok-chung, one of the three suspects in a failed plot to cause an inter-Korean border shoot-out, claimed Saturday he had worked as a secret messenger to the DPRK for President Kim Dae-jung. Testifying at the second trial for the three suspects, Chang said he conveyed a letter from then President-elect Kim Dae-jung to a top official of the DPRK's Committee for Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland during a visit to the DPRK from January 24 to February 4. Chang was accompanied by an ROK agricultural expert to discuss inter-Korean projects, including how to ease the DPRK's food shortage problems by increasing corn production. Kim said in the letter that his incoming administration wanted to establish a channel for dialogue with the DPRK to hold meetings between high-level officials and eventually summit talks, Chang said. He testified that he had heard about the content of the letter before leaving for the DPRK from Lim Dong-won, then secretary-general of the Asia-Pacific Peace Foundation set up by President Kim. Lim was appointed senior presidential secretary for foreign affairs and national security when President Kim took office in February.

Korea Times ("KIM DJ CAMP PROMISED NOTHING TO DPRK," Seoul, 12/21/98) reported that Chong Wa Dae spokesman Park Jie-won said Sunday that the Kim Dae-jung camp made no promises to the DPRK during last year's presidential campaign period. At the same time, he denied a newspaper report which stated that the former opposition National Congress for New Politics (NCNP) last year offered the DPRK a US$1 billion investment on condition that the DPRK exercise "restraint" during the campaign period. This allegation was made by Chang Sok-jung, one of the so-called three "aides" to opposition leader Lee Hoi-chang, during his trial on Saturday. Chang was

arrested on suspicion of having solicited DPRK to wage a shoot- out in the truce village of Panmunjom just days before the 1997 presidential election in hopes that conservative voters would back Lee Hoi-chang's bid for the presidency. Spokesman Park, who was one of the Kim Dae-jung camp's core campaign strategists during the campaign, said, "Concrete legal action will be taken against Chang if he is found to have made false statements detrimental to the NCNP." Park went on to say that the Kim Dae-jung camp "could not even think of contacting DPRK agents" as they were under constant surveillance by domestic intelligence officials.

III. Russian Federation

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1. Alleged US Nuclear Strike Plans against the DPRK

Segodnya's Maksim Yusin ("AN ANTI-AMERICAN WAVE IS GETTING STRONGER IN RUSSIA," Moscow, 1, 12/18/98) reported that nowadays in the RF one can see a rare consensus between the executive and legislative authorities and between different political parties caused by US and British missile and air strikes against Iraq. In addition to several diplomatic steps and increase of military alert, various statesmen and politicians are calling for changes in the draft 1999 budget to increase defense expenditures and to boycott imports from the US, as well as proposed US aid. The author stated, "But best of all the degree of anti-American hysteria that has seized the lower parliamentary chamber is illustrated by the remarks made by Roman Popkovich, Chairman, Defense Committee, RF State Duma, a member of the Our Home Is Russia faction. According to Interfax news agency, he quite seriously declared that the US 'harbors plans of a nuclear strike against North Korea.'"

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2. Sinking of DPRK Submarine

Izvestia's Yuriy Savenkov ("A SUBMARINE FROM PYONGYANG SUNK IN SOUTH KOREAN WATERS," Moscow, 3, 12/19/98), Segodnya's Aleksandr Chudodeyev ("KIM JONG IL ENVIES THE GLORY OF SADDAM HUSSEIN," Moscow, 3, 12/19/98) and Nezavisimaia gazeta's Marina Smirnova ("A FIASCO OF NORTH KOREAN INTELLIGENCE," Moscow, 2, 12/19/98) reported that a DPRK 10-ton "half- submersible type" intelligence submarine was intercepted in ROK territorial waters. The DPRK bought some 50 submarines of that type, some of them made of plastic, in Yugoslavia in the 1970s. 12 ships and 3 planes tried to "block" it, but it opened fire and as a result of the return fire was sunk 100 kilometers south of Koje Island. The dead body of a DPRK submariner was found, and ROK troops and police undertook a search operation similar to the one that took place in September last year. Segodnya's author in addition speculated about the DPRK's reasons for sending the submarine. Some observers believe that the DPRK military needed intelligence for their missile program. Last Thursday sources in the RF Defense Ministry revealed that a notification about a forthcoming DPRK ballistic missile launching from Musudan Cape launching site was received at the international joint (RF and US) missile launch control center. The DPRK so far has not reacted to the submarine incident, but sharply criticized the US for missile strikes against Iraq. In addition, a couple of weeks ago former US Defense Secretary William Perry admitted that during the US-DPRK dispute in 1994 over the DPRK nuclear program, the US developed plans for a massive missile strike against the DPRK. Therefore, the author concluded, "at present Kim Jong-il's solidarity with Saddam Hussein looks quite logical."

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3. DPRK War Warnings

Segodnya ("PYONGYANG IS READY TO ANSWER WASHINGTON WITH A DEVASTATING BLOW," Moscow, 3, 12/15/98) reported that the DPRK Consulate General on December 14 circulated in the city of Nakhodka a statement that the US is preparing to start a "second Korean War" against the DPRK, in case they fail to get an opportunity to inspect underground facilities in DPRK territory. Allegedly the war is to consist of 5 stages: blockade, air strikes, airborne operation to encircle Pyongyang, occupation of the whole territory, and then "re-unification of the country under the liberal democratic system." Over 545,000 US troops, over 630,000 "puppet" ROK troops, 5-7 US Navy ships, and the US Air Force are to be engaged. The DPRK "does not wish a war, but does not avoid it either" and "a devastating blow" would be the answer, the statement emphasized.

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4. US-Japan Anti-Missile Defense

Nezavisimoye voyennoye obozreniye's Daniil Vyazemskiy ("ANTI- MISSILE TANDEM IN THE FAR EAST," Moscow, 12/17-24/98, #48(122)) published an article on US-Japanese relations and Japan's attitude concerning a creation of a theater anti-missile defense system since 1993, when the DPRK first launched its "Rodong 1" missile. The launching of a DPRK missile on August 31, 1998 gave a new impetus to the activities. While in the past Japan tried to lay more of a burden on the US, now, in the author's opinion, the situation is such that US assistance might come too late. The Japanese government is expected to make its decision based on research that has been going on for some time. The author also argued that if the PRC's reaction to creation of that anti-missile system is negative, then creation of such system in Japan will accelerate modernization of the PRC's nuclear weapons and ICBMs.

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5. RF Citizens in South Kurils

Izvestia's Andrey Nekrasov and Mikhail Klimentyev ("KURILS ARE GOING TO JAPAN," Moscow, 1, 2, 12/16/98) published an article on their trip to the South Kurils. The main idea of the article was that the "South Kurils do not need to go officially under Japan's jurisdiction. They already have one feet in the Country of the Rising Sun," because Japanese-made cars run there exclusively, and only Japanese eggs and apples are sold in the shops. "During a winter storm, we were warming ourselves sitting near Japanese heaters and drinking Japanese tea from Japanese kettles," wrote the authors. "We saw bilingual names written on fishing vessels coming to the pier built by Japanese. There are hieroglyphs on all seafood packages produced here." Locals complained that the price of "babaika," Japanese fruit vodka, had increased two-fold. Local sailors regularly visiting Hokkaido ports bring back everything from video cameras to gasoline to cars to fruit. "Now we are almost Japan" was the reaction of a majority of locals to the recent signing of a friendship and economic cooperation agreement between Hokkaido and Sakhalin Region, which incorporates the South Kurils. Locals can go to Hokkaido visa-free, and moreover are entertained there free of charge. Obviously "the state has forgotten about its citizens" living in the South Kurils. Only foreign investments can let the RF economically sustain the Isles. Some of those who left after the 1994 earthquake are now returning. The authors concluded, "Therefore there is hope. But which flag should they hope for?"

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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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