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I. United States

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The Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA NOW BATTLING DROUGHT," Tokyo, 7/21/97) reported that the DPRK's Korean Central Broadcasting Station said in a broadcast monitored in Tokyo Monday that the DPRK is now battling a drought that has spread to hundreds of thousands of acres. The drought, caused by sparse rainfall and recently aggravated by a heat wave, poses a new threat to this summer's grain harvest. Farmers, soldiers, and even clerical workers are trying to bring water to the arid fields, but rivers, lakes and reservoirs are rapidly drying up, and rice paddies are so parched they are cracking, the broadcast said. Hardest hit are farms in the South and North Pyongan provinces, South and North Hamgyong provinces and North Hwanghae province, in the country's central, east and northeast regions, the radio said. The DPRK usually receives large amounts of rain in July, just when crops need it the most, the broadcast said. In the previous two years, floods have aggravated the chronic food shortage in the isolated state.

2. DPRK Seeks Improved Relations with US, Japan

The Associated Press ("N. KOREA LOOKS TOWARD U.S., JAPAN," Seoul, 7/21/97) reported that the DPRK's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said Monday that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il wants to improve relations with the US and Japan, but believes relations can only improve if Washington and Tokyo end their "hostile" policy toward the DPRK. Kim reportedly made the comments in a letter to Mun Myong-ja, a Korean-American journalist who publishes "Asian News" in Washington and a frequent traveler to the DPRK who visited Pyongyang in early July. "In our relations with the United States, we will faithfully implement the agreed points in conformity with the idea and principle of our foreign policy," Kim was quoted as saying. "This is our invariable stand." However, many problems remain unsolved because of the "imperialists' hostile activities," the letter said. As for relations with Japan, Kim said: "Our position for establishing good neighborhood and friendship with Japan is also consistent." "I think the settlement of the issues depends on the attitude of the United States and Japan toward us," he said. Although Kim's remarks were broad and communicated no new positions, the letter itself was notable, as Kim rarely comments openly on such issues.

3. Former US Joint Chiefs Chair Comments on DPRK

Reuters ("N. KOREA REFORMS SEEN ENDING STALINIST SYSTEM," Seoul, 7/18/97) reported that Colin Powell, former chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, on a four-day visit to the ROK, said Friday during a seminar about

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cause its communist system to collapse. "North Korea is working from a position of weakness. At the end of the day it will fail as a state. Whether it will be abrupt or over a long time remains to be seen," Powell said. "North Korea has experimented with the free-trade zone, but it will eventually serve as a poison pill," Powell said, referring to the Rajin-Sonbong area, which the DPRK has designated as a free economic zone in a bid to lure foreign investment. Powell also said that he did not see any major impact from Wednesday's border clash between North and South Korean soldiers that followed an intrusion by a group of DPRK troops into the ROK. Powell, commander of a US battalion in the ROK for one year in the 1970s, said the DPRK frequently staged border provocations to keep military tensions high. Powell also accused Pyongyang of letting its citizens starve so it could maintain one of the world's largest armies. "Pictures of starving children are heart-breaking," said Powell. "I don't understand a government that no longer answers to the needs of its people."

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("U.S. POWELL: DIALOGUE WITH N. KOREA SHOULD CONTINUE," Seoul, 7/18/97) reported that Colin Powell, former chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, on a four-day visit to the ROK, said Friday in a speech at an annual symposium sponsored by Citibank that efforts to improve ties with the DPRK should continue in spite of a bloody border clash the preceding Wednesday. The US and the ROK "should keep the process of engagement and negotiation going forward," Powell said. Powell said ROK soldiers reacted appropriately to the intrusion, and urged the DPRK to reciprocate peace moves being pushed by Washington and Seoul. [Ed. note: See related item in the ROK section, below.]

4. ROK Domestic Bribery Scandal

United Press International ("SON OF S.KOREA PRESIDENT DENIES BRIBERY," Seoul, 7/21/97) reported that Kim Hyun-chul, son of ROK president Kim Young-sam, has repeated his admission that he accepted US\$7.4 million from six associates, but again denied that he was bribed, saying the money was intended to help him with "pure operating expenses" and that he did nothing in return. The younger Kim made the statements during questioning at his trial on bribery and tax evasion charges, repeating answers he gave two weeks earlier. However, answering yes/no questions from defense lawyers, Kim admitted he was inclined to apologize for taking the money, no matter what the intention of the donations.

5. ROK Domestic Presidential Election

The Associated Press ("KOREA PARTY NOMINATES CANDIDATE," Seoul, 7/21/97) reported that the ROK's ruling New Korea Party on Monday chose Lee Hoi-chang, a respected former prime minister and Supreme Court justice, as its candidate in presidential elections later this year. In a hotly disputed runoff for the nomination marred by allegations of vote-rigging and smear tactics, Lee beat out Kyongki Province Governor Rhee In-je, 6,922 votes to 4,622. Lee is known for his upstanding image and so is expected to bolster his party's chances of retaining the presidency in the face of opposition claims of government corruption. Several former Cabinet ministers and close associates of current president Kim Young-sam have been convicted of bribery, and Kim's son, Hyun-chul, also is now on trial on charges of bribery and tax evasion. Lee, 62, had been considered the favorite since President Kim appointed him to become chairman of the governing party in March. Lee's ascension to the party chairmanship had come as a surprise because he had been fired by President Lee in 1994, for disobedience, after just one year as prime minister. Monday's nomination marks the first time the New Korea Party's incumbent president did not designate a successor, but rather let the national convention elect a nominee. Lee most likely will face Kim Dae-jung, 72, head of the leading opposition party National Congress for New Politics, and Kim Jong-pil, 71, of the United Liberal Democrats.

II. Republic of Korea

1. DPRK Intentions for Peace Talks

An ROK Foreign Ministry official announced yesterday that despite recent threats to boycott, the DPRK will come to the August 5th preparatory meeting for four-way peace talks. He dismissed Friday's response by a DPRK Foreign Ministry spokesman which countered the US condemnation of the DPRK over a recent inter-Korean border clash. The official also noted that former US Ambassador to the ROK James Laney and former Senator Sam Nunn flew into Pyongyang yesterday. While there, they will press the DPRK to be sincere toward the four-way peace talks and bilateral dialogue with the ROK. Laney and Nunn are scheduled to come to Seoul Tuesday to brief ROK Foreign Minister Yoo Chong-ha on the results of their DPRK visit. The two will emphasize that the ROK is the only country that can help the DPRK reform its struggling economy. Visiting the DPRK as individuals, without any specific mission concerning US-DPRK relations, Laney and Nunn will also urge the DPRK to participate in the four-party talks to transform the fragile armistice on the Korean Peninsula into a permanent peace settlement. Though there is only a slight possibility that they will be able to meet with the DPRK's de facto leader Kim Jong-il, they are expected to meet with Foreign Minister Kim Yong-nam and other DPRK foreign policy-makers. The official said working-level officials from the US, the PRC, and the two Koreas may hold a meeting in New York this weekend to discuss preparations for the August 5 preparatory peace talks. Anticipated participants for the four-way working-level meeting are Lee Soo-hyok, counselor for political affairs at the ROK Embassy in Washington, Mark Minton, director of the Korea Desk at the US State Department, Li Kun, deputy head of the DPRK mission to the UN, and a counselor from the PRC's Embassy in Washington. Meanwhile, a Japanese daily reported last Saturday that Pyongyang intends to participate in the four-party talks regardless of the results of the preparatory meeting. Citing a DPRK source at the UN, the Sankei Shimbun said the DPRK will not demand food aid at the preparatory meeting and will limit discussions to steps necessary for the convening of the four-party meeting. (Korea Herald, "THE DPRK TO COME TO PEACE TALKS DESPITE BOYCOTT THREATS," 07/21/97)

2. Former US Joint Chiefs Chair on ROK-US Military Cooperation

ROK President Kim Young-sam received former Chair of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell Saturday at Chong Wa Dae (The Blue House) where the two exchanged views on overall military cooperation between the ROK and the US. President Kim, concerned with the recent armed provocation by the DPRK in the DMZ, said that the DPRK is finalizing war preparations despite serious food shortages and its mounting economic crisis. Kim was quoted as saying, "A firm and unified US-ROK defense posture is indispensable in preventing a possible misjudgment by the DPRK as well as coping with the uncertain future of the DPRK." (Korea Herald, "PRESIDENT KIM YOUNG-SAM, POWELL DISCUSS ALLIANCE," 07/21/97) [Ed. note: See related items in the US section, above.]

3. Alleged DPRK Grain Exports to Japan Disproved

A report last week by the Japanese newspaper, Sankei Shimbun, suggesting that the DPRK was exporting corn to Japan has proven to be false. Quoting intelligence sources, a spokesman from the ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed the Aomori Agricultural Prefecture's previous statement which indicated that the corn had come from East PRC and was shipped via the DPRK port of Chongjin for ease and speed of transport. The corn arrived in Aomori on Thursday aboard the DPRK vessel 'Mangyongbongho' where it will be used as feed for poultry. The ROK Ministry stressed that the corn had nothing to do with food aid to the DPRK, but was simply a transaction between Japan and a PRC-Japanese joint venture in the PRC. (Chosun Ilbo, "CORN IN JAPAN FROM THE PRC, NOT THE DPRK," 07/21/97)

4. ROK-Taiwan Relations

The Taiwanese government has filed a protest with the ROK for making a change to the nationalist island's official name. According to a Taiwanese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Taiwan expatriates in the ROK recently had the nationality reference in their foreigner registration cards changed from "the Republic of China" to "Chinese Taipei." The spokesman said, "The measure has inflicted serious harm on us...The altered title will never be accepted by the ROC (Republic of China) government and the nationals in the ROK." He also noted that Taiwanese Vice Foreign Minister Cheng Wen-hua called in ROK's charge d'affair to Taiwan Kang Min Soo to voice unhappiness over the incident. (Korea Times, "TAIWAN PROTESTS ITS NAME CHANGE EFFECTED BY KOREA," 07/21/97)

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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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