NAPSNet Daily Report 22 December, 1997

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report 22 December, 1997", NAPSNet Daily Report, December 22, 1997, https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-22-december-1997/

IN TODAY'S REPORT:

I. United States

- 1. ROK-DPRK Relations
- 2. ROK National Security Agency
- 3. ROK-DPRK Red Cross Talks
- 4. Pardon of Former ROK Presidents
- 5. DPRK Diplomat Caught Smuggling
- 6. ROK Financial Crisis
- 7. Taiwan Reaction to ROK Election
- 8. Alleged Taiwan Nuclear Program
- 9. US Bases in Japan

II. Republic of Korea

- 1. Pardon of Former Presidents
- 2. ROK-DPRK Red Cross Talks
- 3. DPRK Reports on ROK Presidential Election

I. United States

1. ROK-DPRK Relations

The Los Angeles Times (Jim Mann, "NEW LEADER MEANS NEW HOPE FOR KOREA PEACE," Washington, 12/20/97) reported that US observers see the election of Kim Dae-jung as potentially leading to a breakthrough in ROK-DPRK relations. Senator Robert Torricelli, D-NJ, who met with Kim in a visit to Seoul last week, stated "Kim Dae-jung is not just another South Korean political leader rising to the presidency. He's a potentially historic figure. If there were ever a chance for a major change in North-South relations, it is now upon us." Carter Eckert, director of the Korea Institute at Harvard University, said, "Kim Jong-il is trying to project himself as a new leader with a new perspective. In South Korea, just the change in regime is good. This could be a really historic opportunity, if both sides are willing to seize it." However, Eckert also warned that Kim Dae-jung's campaign alliance with Kim Jong-pil could cause problems. "Kim Jong-pil has a different attitude

toward North Korea, more conservative, more suspicious, less willing to engage," Eckert said. Douglas Paal, a former Bush administration official now with the Asia-Pacific Policy Center, said, "Presumably, [Kim Dae Jung] is going to want summitry, and the North is going to respond positively." However, he added that "the United States would not like to see the four-party talks abandoned in favor of summitry."

The New York Times (Nicholas D. Kristof, "PRESIDENT-ELECT IN SEOUL SUGGESTS TALKS WITH NORTH," Seoul, 12/20/97) quoted an unnamed Western diplomat as saying that president-elect Kim Dae-jung is anxious to improve relations with the DPRK. The diplomat said, "I'm cautiously optimistic that we'll see this develop in the next six months. There will be a serious effort to get this going, and given the receptivity in the North, it may even succeed." Former ROK Foreign Minister Han Sung-joo stated, "It hasn't been an unwillingness on the part of South Korea that has kept dialogue from taking place. It's the willingness of the North Koreans that is crucial." Kim Myong-chol, a DPRK citizen living in Japan, stated, "The North Korean reaction to the election is positive, definitely positive, but still a bit reserved."

2. ROK National Security Agency

The Associated Press (Sang-Hun Choe, "KIM WORRIES SOUTH KOREAN SPY AGENCY," Seoul, 12/20/97) reported that ROK analysts expect President-elect Kim Dae-jung to reform the Agency for National Security Planning, which he blames for trying to kill him on four occasions. Auh Soo-young, a political scientist at Ewha Women's University, was quoted as saying, "I don't think Kim will indulge in political revenge. But he will at least try to reform the agency." The Moonhwa Ilbo likewise said that an overhaul of the agency now appears inevitable. Kim has said he will restructure the agency so that it will be barred from interfering in domestic politics and will instead focus on gathering information overseas. He has also proposed revising laws that give the agency the authority to "investigate anyone suspected of sympathizing with communist North Korea." However, Kim Keun-tae, a former jailed dissident and now a legislator from the president-elect's party, said, "There is a matter of priority. People right now are preoccupied with the economic problem." Nam Kyu-sun, a secretary-general at the human rights group Minkahyup, said that Kim Dae-jung could face tough resistance in attempting to reform the agency.

3. ROK-DPRK Red Cross Talks

The Associated Press (Charles Hutzler, "KOREA RED CROSS DISCUSSES FOOD AID," Beijing, 12/22/97) and Reuters (Paul Eckert, "KOREA FOOD AID TALKS HIT SNAG," Beijing, 12/22/97) reported that Red Cross delegations of the ROK and DPRK on Monday held talks regarding food aid to the DPRK. Lee Byung-woong, the chief ROK Red Cross delegate, said that the two sides "discussed in very general terms" last Thursday's ROK presidential election. He added that they also talked about president-elect Kim Dae-jung's call for a summit with Kim Jong-il. Lee stated, "There was a mutual atmosphere of hope that the New Year could bring new opportunities for cooperation." However, he said that the delegations met for just two hours before breaking off their talks with an agreement to meet again on Tuesday. "There were various sticking points on both sides. I don't want to elaborate until we reach some agreement on those points in tomorrow's discussions." He said that the ROK delegation requested that officials from its organization or the international Red Cross be allowed to monitor distribution and repeated a demand that aid be transported through the border truce village of Panmunjom, instead of by sea. Lee added, "We are facing great difficulty at present which could cut into contributions, but we hope to appeal to humanitarianism and compatriotism." Sources close to the talks said that the key disagreement of Monday's food aid discussions appeared to be DPRK restrictions on access to provinces hardest hit by the famine. Johan Schaar, regional head of the IFRC, stated, "This (transparency) has been a problem and is still a problem in North Korea, and there's a problem of access as well." However, Sten Swedlund, head of the Red Cross

delegation in the DPRK, welcomed the government's decision to allow the group to double its presence in the country to six and to permit two of the new staff to be based in northern Pyongan and Chagang provinces. "This is a change, definitely, in our working situation," he said.

4. Pardon of Former ROK Presidents

The Associated Press (Paul Shin, "TWO FORMER KOREAN LEADERS FREED," Seoul, 12/22/97) and the Los Angeles Times (David Holley, "JAILED EX-PRESIDENTS GO FREE IN SOUTH KOREA," Seoul, 12/22/97) reported that former ROK presidents Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo were freed Monday in a presidential pardon of their sentences for treason and corruption. The amnesty was recommended by President-elect Kim Dae-jung during a meeting Saturday with President Kim Young-sam, where the two agreed that the gesture would help reconcile the country and enable it to focus on repairing its economy. The amnesty also restored the civil rights of the two ex-presidents but did not relieve them of the fines assessed for amassing huge amounts of bribes. Twelve ex-army generals who helped Chun and Roh stage a 1979 coup d'etat and later served under their governments were also freed. After his release, Chun stated, "I deeply apologize to the people for the anxiety and concern I and those around me caused, and I thank the people for their warm encouragement and love shown to me during the past two years." He added, "When I took office in September 1980, our country was in a crisis, but our people made a miracle that surprised the world. United under President-elect Kim Dae-jung, I'm sure our people will again turn this crisis into an opportunity to build a great nation." Roh upon his release said, "I hope the president-elect will lead the people to rebuild our economy and to eliminate regional and class disputes, and I am sure he will succeed in this." Later, at a university near the homes of the two ex-presidents in western Seoul, 300 students clashed with riot police, shouting "no freedom to Chun and Roh!"

Reuters ("S. KOREA RIGHTS GROUP SLAMS CHUN, ROH AMNESTY," Seoul, 12/20/97) reported that the ROK human rights group Minkahyup on Saturday criticized the government decision to free former presidents Chun Doo hwan and Roh Tae-woo. Lim Ki-ran, a spokeswoman for the group, stated, "The decision really provokes our anger. Why should laws exist if they fail to punish the most ugly criminals." She added, "The amnesty is a backward step in our history and will not help heal national wounds inflicted by Chun and Roh." The human rights group also said there were still many prisoners of conscience jailed by the former presidents. "So many people were imprisoned, tortured and murdered under Chun and Roh's military regimes. How dare the government think about freeing the two former presidents," Lim said.

5. DPRK Diplomat Caught Smuggling

Reuters (Gopal Sharma, "NORTH KOREAN GOLD SMUGGLERS OUTSMARTED IN NEPAL," Kathmandu, 12/19/97) reported that Nepal customs officials said on Friday that Jo kun-Ha, a counselor at the DPRK embassy in Kathmandu, and his wife, Yun song-Hwa, were held last Sunday after flying into Kathmandu airport with more than US$1 million worth of gold stuffed in packets of chocolate and cookies. The Nepali government ordered Jo and Yun to leave the country within 72 hours, in what was Nepal's first case for decades of a resident diplomat's official expulsion.

6. ROK Financial Crisis

Reuters ("S. KOREA PRESIDENT-ELECT REASSURES U.S.," Seoul, 12/22/97) reported that vice-spokesman Yoon Ho-jung of the ROK National Congress for New Politics Party said that president-elect Kim Dae-jung on Monday told US Ambassador to the ROK Steven Bosworth and Deputy Treasury Secretary David Lipton that he will adhere to the terms and conditions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) aid package. Kim also asked the US to support the ROK efforts to overcome the economic crisis, Yoon said.

The Associated Press (Kyong-Hwa Seok, "S. KOREA: LAYOFFS MAY BE NEEDED," Seoul, 12/22/97) reported that ROK President-elect Kim Dae-jung said Monday in a meeting with US Treasury official David Lipton that layoffs by companies facing bankruptcy may be necessary. Kim stated, "When businesses cannot save themselves from bankruptcy by reducing salaries, layoffs are inevitable." Kim said he found in reviewing a government report that the ROK's financial crisis is more serious than he thought.

7. Taiwan Reaction to ROK Election

Reuters (Jeffrey Parker, "SOUTH KOREA CHANGEOVER COULD ROIL TAIWAN-CHINA BALANCE," Taipei, 12/19/97) reported that ROK President-elect Kim Dae-jung recently met with Taiwan opposition leader Hsu Hsin-liang, who like Kim spent several years in jail for political activities. Hsu was quoted by Taipei's Liberty Times as saying in Seoul, "Kim Dae-jung's victory is a great inspiration to the Democratic Progressive Party as it's the first time a candidate from South Korea's opposition has won the presidency." Kim and Hsu first met in the 1980s when both were in exile in the US. The state-run Taiwan Central News Agency quoted Kim as criticizing then-President Roh Tae-woo for switching diplomatic ties to the PRC from Taiwan in 1992. Hsu reportedly said he hoped Taiwan and the ROK could restore the highest level of unofficial ties.

8. Alleged Taiwan Nuclear Program

Reuters ("TAIWAN REAFFIRMS 'NO NUCLEAR WEAPONS' STAND," Taipei, 12/22/97) reported that the Taiwan Defense Ministry and Atomic Energy Council reaffirmed on Monday that Taiwan is not developing nuclear weapons and has no plan to do so. A defense spokesman said, "The Republic of China has no plans to develop nuclear weapons capability. Our national policy forbids efforts directed toward production of nuclear or biological weapons." Hu Ching-piao, chairman of the Atomic Energy Council, stated that the council's research and development budget was transparent and contained no funds for making nuclear bombs. The Institute for Science and International Security, a private US anti-nuclear proliferation group, said on Friday in Washington that Taiwan might be able to build a nuclear bomb with a one- or two-year crash program. The group said however that Taiwan appeared to have dropped active bomb-building efforts since the late 1980s under US and other international pressure.

9. US Bases in Japan

The Associated Press ("JAPAN VOTERS REJECT U.S. BASE," Tokyo, 12/21/97) and the New York Times (Nicholas D. Kristof, "OKINAWAN VOTERS OPPOSE PLANNED U.S. MILITARY BASE," Tokyo, 12/22/97) reported that nearly 54 percent of voters in the city of Nago on the island of Okinawa on Sunday said they do not want a US military helicopter port to be moved near their city. The outcome of the vote is not binding, and it was not immediately clear whether the proposed floating heliport could be built. Okinawa Governor Masahide Ota stated, "We have to put great importance on what the people have said through this vote." About 82 percent of the city's 38,176 eligible voters turned out for the referendum, Under a Japan-US agreement reached last year, the Futemma Air Station is to be closed in five to seven years, and the US wants to build the heliport off the Marines' Camp Schwab in Nago to handle helicopters from Futemma in southern Okinawa.

US State Department Deputy Spokesman James Foley ("STATE DEPT. NOON BRIEFING," USIA Transcript, 12/22/97) reported that despite Sunday's referendum in the Okinawan city of Nago, the US remains prepared to relocate the Marine Corps Air Station Futenma after adequate replacement facilities are completed and operational. He stated, "We are, of course, aware of the results of the referendum, but we believe this is a domestic matter for Japan."

II. Republic of Korea

1. Pardon of Former Presidents

Saturday's meeting between President Kim Young-sam and President-elect Kim Dae-jung has set the direction for future relations between the two leaders, analysts said on December 21. The two released a six-point agreement summing up their 65-minute meeting at Chongwadae, which was highlighted by their agreement to pardon the jailed former presidents Chun Doo Hwan and Roh Tae-woo. The agreement, announced by presidential spokesman Shin Woo-jae at the end of their meeting, also included the leaders' pledge to maintain close cooperation in economic and transition affairs. In a symbolic gesture of partnership, the two leaders agreed to establish a joint economic committee operated by members both of the outgoing and incoming governments. Each side will send six representatives to the panel. (Korea Herald, Chon Shi-yong, "TWO KIMS EMPHASIZE STABILITY IN TRANSITION; SIX-POINT AGREEMENT AT CHONG WA DAE MEETING INCLUDES RELEASE OF CHUN, ROH," 12/22/97)

2. ROK-DPRK Red Cross Talks

ROK and DPRK Red Cross officials were set to meet Monday in Beijing for the year's fourth round of talks on aid to the DPRK. Secretary-General Lee Byung-woong of the ROK Korean National Red Cross (KNRC) and his DPRK counterpart, Choi Kyong-lin, will discuss the KNRC's plan to send the third batch of aid to the DPRK this year. However, the KNRC will be sending less corn but more medicine and clothes due to the economic situation in the ROK, said Lee. Lee also said that the KNRC delegation will again press for transparency in the distribution of aid and the establishment of reunion centers for divided Korean families at any place on the Korean Peninsula. (Korea Herald, "RED CROSSES MEET TO DISCUSS NEXT ROUND OF AID," 12/22/97)

3. DPRK Reports on ROK Presidential Election

The DPRK reported December 21 on the ROK's recent presidential election through its government media, but did not mention who the next ROK president was, the Naewoe Press said. According to Naewoe, the DPRK said through its Central Broadcasting Station and Radio Pyongyang that "The South held a presidential election on the 18th, achieving a transfer of power. Both the South Korean and foreign press (hailed) the transition but pointed out the immensely difficult tasks that lie ahead for the president-elect." The broadcast included a Japanese daily's editorial on the ROK election, which read, "it was clear that the next president has inherited a tremendous political and economic burden." (Korea Herald, "NORTH REPORTS ON ELECTION, BUT NOT WINNER," 12/22/97)

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 L. Huntley: napsnet@nautilus.org
Berkeley, California, United States

Timothy L. Savage: napsnet@nautilus.org

Berkeley, California, United States

Shin Dong-bom: dongbom.shin@anu.edu.au
Seoul, Republic of Korea

Choi Chung-moon: cily@star.elim.co.kr
Seoul, Republic of Korea

Hiroyasu Akutsu: akutsu@glocomnet.or.jp
Tokyo, Japan

Peter Razvin: icipu@glas.apc.org
Moscow, Russian Federation

Chunsi Wu: dlshen@fudan.ac.cn
Shanghai, People's Republic of China

Dingli Shen: dlshen@fudan.ac.cn
Shanghai, People's Republic of China

View this online at: https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-22-december-1997/

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