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I. United States

1. PRC-Japan DPRK Asylum Seekers

Reuters (Jeremy Page and Teruaki Ueno, "3-NORTH KOREAN DEFECTORS HEAD FOR MANILA, THEN SEOUL," Beijing, Tokyo, 05/22/02) reported that the five DPRK asylum seekers dragged from a Japanese consulate in the PRC left Beijing on Wednesday headed via the Philippines for asylum in the ROK. The five -- two men, two women and a three-year-old girl -- were ushered by police onto a China Southern Airlines flight headed for Manila via the eastern PRC port of Xiamen, witnesses said. The DPRK defectors were expected to fly on to the ROK from Manila. "There was a request from the South Korean ambassador and Vice President (and Foreign Secretary) Teofisto Guingona has approved it," Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs Under-Secretary Franklin Ebdalin stated. PRC-based diplomats said the release of the five did not mean China was accepting blame for the incident and they expected the dispute to simmer for a while. Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi urged a speedy resolution to the stalemate, "Japan is doing its best to resolve the issue as soon as possible, but there is no change in Japan's stance. That's why we are lodging a protest with China. We are doing our best not to let the issue harm friendly ties between Japan and China."

2. DPRK Humanitarian Crisis

The Associated Press (Christopher Bodeen, "AID WORKER WARNS THAT NORTH KOREA IS IN DANGER OF MORE HUNGER WITHOUT URGENT FOREIGN AID," Beijing, 05/22/02) reported that the DPRK could plunge back into its deadly famine unless foreign donors urgently send it more food, a leading aid provider said. Grain supplies will run out in July while the autumn harvest will not come in until October, said Kathi Zellweger, who coordinates aid to the DPRK for the charity Caritas. The United Nations says donors have pledged only US$23.5 million of the $US258 million in supplies sought this year. Its World Food Program, the DPRK's biggest food supplier, has been forced to cut rations to some 1 million people. "Without food aid, the DPRK could easily slip back into famine," Zellweger said Tuesday. "We could be back to square one." As many as 2 million people are believed to have died since 1995.

3. Inter-Korean Family Reunions

The Associated Press (Lee Soo-Jeong, "HUNDREDS OF ELDERLY SOUTH KOREANS APPEAL FOR REUNIONS WITH FAMILIES IN NORTH KOREA," Seoul, 05/22/02) reported that on Wednesday that 300 elderly ROK citizens who have relatives in the DPRK converged in central Seoul to appeal for more reunions of family members who were separated by the war. The demonstrators, most of them in their 70s and 80s, also demanded the prompt establishment of a permanent meeting place so separated family members can meet on a regular basis. "We cannot die before we are reunited with our families!" chanted the demonstrators. "Let us die after we visit our hometowns!" The ROK has proposed building a permanent meeting place for separated family members near the border, but the DPRK has not accepted.

4. Japan-Russia Molotov Incident

The Associated Press ("RUSSIAN COAST GUARD GENERAL, WIFE IN CRITICAL CONDITION IN JAPAN," Tokyo, 05/22/02) reported that a Russian Coast Guard general and his wife were hospitalized with severe burns Wednesday following an emergency airlift to Japan after a molotov cocktail attack on a Russian-controlled Pacific island that lies north of Japan, officials said. Major General Vitaly Gamov, chief of the Russian Coast Guard on the island of Sakhalin, and his wife were admitted in critical condition to the Sapporo Medical College on the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido, hospital spokesman Naoki Shioya said. Gamov's wife, Larissa, was later airlifted to Kyorin University Hospital in Tokyo for more advanced treatment, Japan Coast Guard spokesman Toshio Yoyokura said. Gamov remained in Sapporo. The couple were burned Tuesday when assailants threw three bottles containing explosives through his apartment window, Russian officials said. Investigators believe the attack may have been connected to Gamov's work. Coast guards patrolling the waters off Russia's eastern shore spend much of their time chasing poachers who illegally fish for crabs and other seafood to sell in nearby Japan. Gamov suffered burns on about 95 percent of his body and was "in shock," Shioya said. His wife was being treated at a separate Sapporo hospital, Shioya said. In a statement late Tuesday, Japan's Foreign Ministry said Gamov has cooperated closely with Japan and that it responded on humanitarian grounds to the Russian side's request to send the couple to Japan. Japan said that all treatment costs will be borne by the Russian side.

5. Cross-Straits Economic Relations

The Associated Press (William Ide, "TAIWANESE BUSINESSES EXCITED ABOUT SIGNS THAT TAIWAN, CHINA MIGHT START DISCUSSING AIR, SHIPPING LINKS," Taipei, 05/22/02) and Reuters (Jeremy Page and Alice Hung, "CHINA URGES TAIWAN TO ACT ON DIRECT LINKS," Beijing, Taipei, 05/22/02) reported that the PRC has invited two Taiwan tycoons to the mainland to

discuss opening direct trade, transport and postal links, blocked for more than half a century, an official from the PRC cabinet's Taiwan Affairs office said on Wednesday. Wang Yung-ching, head of Formosa Plastics and Kao Chin-yen, chairman of food group Uni-President, were invited by Chen Yunlin, director of the State Council's Taiwan Affairs Office, the official said. "We hope Mr Kao and Mr Wang will soon be entrusted by the Taiwan authorities and come to conduct negotiations on the "three links" across the Strait," the office quoted Chen Yunlin as saying. Taiwan's top policymaker on the PRC, Tsai Ing-wen, gave a cautious response, saying the government needs to take conflict of interest into account before considering whether to accept the PRC's invitation. "They can't appoint people on our behalf," Tsai said at a question-and-answer session in parliament. The official China Daily newspaper reported that Chen Yunlin said overtures from Taiwan had "partially narrowed the gap" between the two sides' preconditions for talks on the links. "We hope that the Taiwan authorities will not just play again a voting gimmick of paying only lip service," he said. Chen Yunlin's remarks were the PRC's first official reaction to Taiwan's proposal to let private groups negotiate directly with the PRC on opening the "three links," which Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian said this month was "a road we must take."

II. Russian Federation

1. RF-PRC Defense Ministers' Talks

Nezavisimaya gazeta ("NEWS .... RUSSIA-PRC," Moscow, 6, 05/17/02) reported that PRC Defense Minister Chi Haotian on a visit to Moscow met yesterday with RF Defense Minister Sergey Ivanov. They discussed bilateral cooperation issues, global threats to security chiefly in Central Asia and fight against international terrorism. On May 15, on the eve of the Moscow meeting of defense ministers of the member countries of Shanghai Cooperation Organization, PRC Defense Minister said PRC had no claims for the former Soviet naval base in Kamrahn, Vietnam.

2. RF-DPRK Foreign Ministers' Talks

Nezavisimaya gazeta's Gennadiy Charodeyev ("KIM JONG-IL WROTE TO VLADIMIR PUTIN," Moscow, 3, 05/22/02) reported that DPRK Foreign Minister Paek Nam-sun came on an official visit to Moscow, the first of its kind in 15 years. RF Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Losyukov interestingly remarked: " It is a pure coincidence that the North Korean representative is holding talks at the Smolenskaya Square [where RF Foreign Ministry is located - P.R.] practically on the eve of US President George Bush's visit to Russia." Izvestia's source in the Kremlin Administration have been more frank about RF-DPRK Foreign Ministers' talks, saying: "The issues of the situation on the Korean Peninsula may be included into the agenda of the forthcoming Russian-American summit. That will be solved today." According to the source, RF "has been desperately trying to talk USA out of introducing sanctions against those countries," that is DPRK, Iraq and Iran. RF is highly interested in establishing a direct railway link between DPRK and Western Europe through RF, the latter thus earning billions of US dollars.

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

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