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In today's Report:

[I. United States](#)

- [1. US Statement on Peace Talks and Food Aid](#)
- [2. Hwang Jang-yop Arrives in Seoul](#)
- [3. Peace Talks Postponement and DPRK Food Aid](#)
- [4. Japanese Seize DPRK Drug Shipment](#)

[II. Republic of Korea](#)

- [1. DPRK Food Aid](#)
- [2. DPRK-Japan Contact in PRC](#)
- [3. DPRK Reply on Peace Talks](#)
- [4. Hwang Defection](#)

I. United States

1. US Statement on Peace Talks and Food Aid

US State Department Spokesman Nicholas Burns ("STATE DEPARTMENT NOON BRIEFING, APRIL 21," USIA Transcript, 4/22/97) commented on the failure of the DPRK to agree to the proposed US - ROK four-party peace talks, and on the food aid issue that emerged as the chief stumbling block. Burns stated that the US has "responded successfully, quite vigorously" and "with some compassion" to the DPRK's wish for food assistance with \$25 million proposed by the US in the last two months. Burns added that the US has responded to every request for food aid to the DPRK by the UN's World Food Program over the last two years, and that the US has been the leading contributor. At the same time Burns reiterated that the US does not "link food aid to these political talks for peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula." The food aid is strictly humanitarian, not political, Burns said. Burns also stated that "the offer of four-party peace talks is still on the table." [Ed. note: Excerpts from Burns' extensive comments on DPRK- related issues at this briefing will be distributed in a separate posting.]

2. Hwang Jang-yop Arrives in Seoul

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[II. Republic of Korea](#)

- [1. DPRK Food Aid](#)
- [2. DPRK-Japan Contact in PRC](#)
- [3. DPRK Reply on Peace Talks](#)
- [4. Hwang Defection](#)

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Reuters ("NUKE WAR REPORT RATTLES SEOUL AS TALKS CRUMBLE," Seoul, 4/22/97) reported that the Chosun Ilbo daily published excerpts of the report said to have been written by Hwang Jang-yop last August. The story reported that Hwang's writing includes assertions that Kim Jong-il "worshipped Hitler and often used the German word 'blitzkrieg', meaning lightning attack" and that the DPRK has a vast network of spies in the ROK. The ROK, the US and Japan were most drawn to the assertion that the DPRK could turn the ROK into a "sea of flames" and that the DPRK believes that if it wages war it will win. Hwang's report also mentions that if the US intervenes, the DPRK plans to attack Japan.

The Washington Post ("US TO INTERVIEW DEFECTOR, COHEN SAYS," Washington, 4/21/97, Page A12) reported Defense Secretary William S. Cohen as saying that the ROK will allow the US to interrogate Hwang Jang-yop. Cohen also said that the DPRK is "one of the most dangerous flash points in the world." The article also reported a statement by Hwang as saying, "The North Korean economy is almost paralyzed. People are suffering from starvation and the government has no choice but to beg from international agencies".

3. Peace Talks Postponement and DPRK Food Aid

The Associated Press ("N. Korea Stalls Peace Talks," New York, 4/21/97) reported that the ROK delegation to the peace talks returned to Seoul after the DPRK did not agree to the four-party peace talks proposed as had been anticipated. Although the DPRK said they could not accept the negotiations offer unless food aid was assured, the US and ROK continue to insist that food aid not be a precondition for the peace negotiations. The report stated that the failure to gain agreement is clearly a setback for the yearlong effort, but that the offer of peace talks remains and that contacts would continue at the consular level. Speaking on CNN, former US Ambassador to ROK Donald Gregg commented that the DPRK is playing "hardball" and that the DPRK knows that they need to

reach out to the ROK for food aid. Gregg adds that this acknowledgment is "extremely painful for them" and that they want to get as much as they can from the US before they "sit down with their brothers in the South." State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns described the situation as a "diplomatic muddle", and added that the US "can't wait for ever" for the DPRK to make up its mind [Ed. note: Please see the summary of Burns' comments below. Excerpts from Burns' extensive comments on DPRK- related issues at this briefing will be distributed in a separate posting.]

Reuters ("NUKE WAR REPORT RATTLES SEOUL AS TALKS CRUMBLE," Seoul, 4/22/97) reported Tuesday that ROK diplomats left New York, after failing to get an agreement from the DPRK to join the proposed peace talks. ROK officials remain hopeful that the DPRK will eventually agree to talks. Foreign Ministry Spokesman Lee Kyu-hyung expressed regret that the DPRK did not accept the proposal, but that "it was not a big disappointment." The proposal failed due to the DPRK demand for immediate large-scale food aid, which was not met by the US and ROK.

4. Japanese Seize DPRK Drug Shipment

Reuters ("NUKE WAR REPORT RATTLES SEOUL AS TALKS CRUMBLE," Seoul, 4/22/97) reported that Japanese police arrested the captain of a DPRK freighter last week after finding 70 kg (154 lb) of amphetamines with a street value estimated at 11.9 billion yen (US\$95 million) in the ship's hold. This event, in addition to suspicions that DPRK agents kidnapped Japanese nationals in the 1970s and 1980s are reportedly leading Tokyo to be reluctant to provide aid to the DPRK according to Chief Cabinet Secretary Seiroku Kajiyama.

II. Republic of Korea

1. DPRK Food Aid

The ROK's Red Cross said Monday it would ship 200 tons of potatoes to help alleviate near-famine conditions in the DPRK this week. Most of the funds for the potatoes, worth an estimated US\$112,000, were raised in a private donation drive launched by the former conductor of the Paris Bastille Orchestra, Chung Myon-Hun, the Red Cross said. The shipment, in 5,000 40-kilogram (88-pound) bags, would leave the western port of Inchon on Friday, it said. The Red Cross is currently awaiting the government's green light to meet with representatives of the DPRK's Red Cross in Beijing on May 3rd to discuss ways to speed up private aid shipments. The meeting was proposed by the ROK's Red Cross on Friday to take place at the truce village of Panmunjom, and agreed to by the DPRK on Saturday. But the DPRK asked that the venue be changed to Beijing, and suggested May 3rd as the date. (Korea Times, "RED CROSS TO SHIP POTATOES TO N.KOREA," 04/22/97)

2. DPRK-Japan Contact in PRC

Japanese and DPRK Foreign Ministry officials met unofficially in Beijing last week for the first time in four months, a report said Monday. The director of the Japanese Foreign Ministry's Northeast Asia bureau, Koro Besho, met a DPRK Foreign Ministry official in charge of Japan on Saturday, Jiji Press quoted sources as saying. The talks were unofficial as Tokyo and Pyongyang do not have official diplomatic ties. "We cannot comment on it (the meeting)," an official at the Northeast Asia bureau in Tokyo said. A similar working-level contact was reportedly made in December last year. Talks on normalizing bilateral relations have been suspended since 1992 following Japanese allegations that the DPRK abducted a Japanese woman, named Li Un-hye, to help train its spies. Earlier this year, a former DPRK agent who defected to the ROK reportedly said he had knowledge about a 13-year-old Japanese girl who was reported missing in 1977, raising suspicions that the DPRK has abducted Japanese nationals. Relatives of people suspected of being abducted by the DPRK, including the parents of the girl, have since formed a group to urge the government to

investigate the issue. Despite U.N. appeals for assistance to the famine-hit DPRK, Japan's government has remained reluctant to send food. (Korea Times, "JAPANESE, NK OFFICIALS HAVE CONTACT IN BEIJING: REPORT," 04/22/97)

3. DPRK Reply on Peace Talks

The DPRK is still not ready to reply to a ROK-US joint proposal for peace talks, according to a US State Department official after informal talks among the three parties here Sunday. "There is still no meeting scheduled" for Washington and Seoul to formally receive Pyongyang's reply, the official -- who requested anonymity -- said after the three-hour working-level meeting. After talks ended Saturday, officials had hoped the DPRK would answer by Sunday to the year-old US and ROK offer to hold four-party negotiations on a peace treaty that would replace the armistice that ended the 1950-53 Korean War. Asked whether the problem was that the DPRK was still not ready, the official said "we and the South Koreans are still waiting to have a meeting." ROK Foreign Ministry spokesman Lee Kyu-hyon told AFP in Seoul that the meeting, which lasted for three hours from 5 a.m. KST, "was held at the sudden request of North Korea." But the session ended inconclusively, he said, with the DPRK repeating its request for pledges of food aid before clarifying its position on the peace talks. Under the peace proposal offered by President Bill Clinton and ROK President Kim Young-sam, the two Koreas would be joined by the US and the PRC as intermediaries at the peace table. The PRC, the DPRK's ideological ally and now an economic partner with the ROK, accepted the proposal in November. But after predicting "good results" from talks on Wednesday, DPRK Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye-gwan, who heads Pyongyang's delegation, refused to resume discussions. (Korea Times, "NK STILL NOT READY TO REPLY TALKS OFFER," 04/22/97)

4. Hwang Defection

Tension surrounding Hwang Jang-yop's defection has subsided with his safe arrival in Seoul on Sunday. However, much of his 67-day odyssey remains a mystery. Hwang, in a speech upon his arrival at a military airport south of Seoul, dropped a bombshell by declaring he decided to defect to the ROK to head off war on the Korean peninsula. He even claimed that the DPRK had chosen the path of armed aggression, using the military forces it has built during the past several decades. Hwang added that he could not help but defect to the ROK to save the lives of 70 million compatriots. So far, Seoul and its Western allies are of the belief that the DPRK, though a formidable military power, has apparently opted for dialogue to get out of its economic hardships, including an imminent famine.

Questions have been raised about the authenticity of Hwang's arrival speech and several letters, allegedly written by him prior to his Feb. 12 defection. Nobody denies the possibility that Hwang had been in contact with the ROK's intelligence agency before deciding to defect to Seoul. Hwang's aide, Kim Duk-hong, is believed to have played a key role in Hwang's defection by working side by side with the ROK intelligence agency. In a letter allegedly written by Hwang on Jan. 2, the secretary of the DPRK Workers' Party, stressed the necessity of strengthening the role of the Agency for National Security Planning if Seoul wants to unify the Korean peninsula as soon as possible. At that time, the Kim Young-sam administration was being rocked by widespread strikes by workers opposing the revision of labor-related laws.

At the same time, the government's plan to strengthen the NSP's investigation power faced stiff opposition from citizens. The top intelligence agency has been suspected of using DPRK issues to divert citizens' attention from controversies involving Seoul's ruling circle. Earlier, many speculated that Hwang would arrive in Seoul in time for the parliamentary hearing on President Kim Young-sam's son, Hyon-chol. In fact, Hwang flew into Seoul days before Hyon-chol's hearing which is slated for Friday. There is speculation that the NSP might be involved in "crafting" Hwang's arrival speech

and letters. However, others believe that Hwang, architect of the DPRK's ruling ideology of *juche* (self-reliance), might have written the speech and letters out of his own conviction. "Hwang is believed to have defected to South Korea because he was disenchanted with the North Korean system with which he had lost all hopes. With the South Korean government facing deep trouble with the labor strikes and other concerns early this year, he might have realized that Seoul's disarray could invite aggression from North Korea," a government official said. However, there are a few mysterious inconsistencies. First, many people still raise questions on how Hwang could have handed over his letters to the intelligence agency and a local newspaper before his defection, which, by DPRK standards, was a suicidal act. Second, the DPRK apparently remained idle in preventing Hwang from defecting to the ROK, despite the fact that the high-ranking figure might reveal the inner workings of the DPRK's ruling circle and other top secrets to the ROK intelligence community. For example, the DPRK seemed to move to tolerate Hwang's defection, at first saying that Hwang had been kidnapped by ROK agents but later conceding that a "renegade may go if he wishes." Moreover, officials here believe that the several attempts by DPRK agents to infiltrate the ROK mission in Beijing where Hwang stayed were a limited show of force. The DPRK also refrained from commenting on Hwang's transfer to the Philippines en route to Seoul. Third, one of the key mysteries surrounding Hwang's defection is whether President Kim's son, Hyon-chol, contacted Hwang to bring him to Seoul. After learning of Hwang's intention of defecting to Seoul, Hyon-chol or his aide Park Tae-jung allegedly visited Beijing last September to meet Kim Duk-hong, who arrived in Seoul along with Hwang. Hyon-chol is believed to have intervened in a wide range of state affairs. Therefore, it is possible that the President's son might also have attempted to play a secret channel of contacts with the DPRK. (Korea Times, "HWANG'S ODYSSEY RAISES MYSTERIES," 04/22/97)

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We invite you to reply to today's report, and we welcome commentary or papers for distribution to the network.

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[Return to the top of this Daily Report](#)

[Go to the Daily Report Archive](#)



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[Return to the top of this Daily Report](#)

[Go to the Daily Report Archive](#)



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