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I. United States

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1. Sinking of DPRK Vessel

The Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA REJECTS BORDER TALKS, Seoul, 12/23/98) reported that the DPRK on Wednesday rejected a proposal by the UN Command (UNC) for border talks to discuss the sinking of a suspected DPRK spy boat in ROK waters. In a news release announcing the

rejection, the UNC said that the DPRK was obliged by previous agreement to discuss possible violations of the Armistice Agreement.

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2. DPRK Missile Launches

US State Department Spokesman Lee McClenny ("STATE DEPARTMENT NOON BRIEFING DECEMBER 22," USIA Transcript, 12/22/98) said that there is no basis for reports that the DPRK is preparing a ballistic missile test. McClenny added, "We view the North Korean missile program as a serious threat to the region and will continue to press North Korea to cease all development, testing and export of missiles and missile technology. We've made clear to Pyongyang that any further missile tests would have very serious consequences for any improvement in our relations with North Korea. And we continue to consult very closely with our Japanese and South Korean allies on North Korean issues."

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3. ROK Military

The Christian Science Monitor carried an analytical article (Michael Baker, "S. KOREA HIT BY A WAVE OF MILITARY MISHAPS," Seoul, 12/23/98, 1) which said that recent mishaps in the ROK military have led some observers to question whether compulsory military service is resulting in discipline problems. Michael Breen, a DPRK expert based in Sussex, England, said that following the 1996 DPRK submarine incident, the ROK government essentially sent "[university] students in uniform to hunt North Korean special forces." The article said that many middle-class ROK males resent the compulsory 26 months of military service. It also said that some university students have complained that the ROK military is unprofessional. It quoted an ex-soldier as saying, "In Korea, being a soldier is not a good job." However, US Army spokeswoman Lee Ferguson said that the US is satisfied with the capabilities of the ROK military. She stated, "We train 'joint and combined' every day, and our training equates to a very high readiness." The article quoted Yang Sung-jin, recently discharged from the ROK army as a sergeant, as saying that there is "no [quality difference] between US and South Korean soldiers." [Ed. note: This article was carried in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service.]

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4. ROK Economy

Reuters ("SKOREA, IMF AGREE ON TREND, NOT FORECAST," Seoul, 12/22/98) reported that Hyun Oh-seok, director general of the economic policy bureau of the ROK Finance Ministry, said on Tuesday that the ROK and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) agree on the future direction of the economy despite disparate growth projections for next year. Hyun stated, "Basically, we are along the same line. The IMF expects some kind of recovery and so do we. The difference is where and when." The IMF said on Monday that the ROK's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) would shrink 7.0 percent this year and one percent in 1999, while the ROK has projected that GDP would contract 5.5 to 6.0 percent in 1998 and show positive growth of two percent next year.

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5. Taiwanese Missile Development

The Associated Press ("TAIWAN TO EMPLOY MORE HOME-DEVELOPED MISSILES - DEFENSE

MIN," Taipei, 12/23/98) reported that Taiwanese Defense Minister Chiang Chung-ling said Wednesday that the military plans to cut back purchases of foreign-made anti-aircraft missiles after domestically produced versions were successfully tested. Chiang stated, "Our policy is to give priority to weapons systems that we can produce domestically." He said that the air force has already ordered Taiwan-made Sky Bow surface-to-air missiles from the military-run Chungshan Institute of Technology and Science, which developed them. Chiang did not comment on a newspaper report that Taiwan will suspend its purchases of US-made Avenger air defense systems, which use Stinger surface-to-air missiles. The China Times said the Taiwanese army decided to take delivery of 70 such systems, instead of the originally planned 200, to save funds in preparation for Taiwan's participation in the US-proposed theater missile defense program. The report said that the navy and air forces will also cut back their purchases of Stingers.

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6. Taiwanese Toxic Waste Exports

The Associated Press (Chris Fontaine, "CAMBODIANS CLEANING UP TOXIC WASTE," Sihanoukville, 12/23/98) and Reuters ("CAMBODIANS DON CHEMICAL SUITS TO GATHER UP WASTE," Sihanoukville, 12/23/98) reported that Cambodian soldiers wearing protective suits on Wednesday began cleaning up 3,000 tons of suspected toxic waste imported from Taiwan. Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister Sar Kheng stated, "We have to force this [Taiwanese] company to pay damages." Officials said that they hoped the start of the cleanup would ease the public outcry over the waste. Environment Minister Mok Mareth said initial tests conducted on samples of the waste have shown it contains the poisonous metal mercury, but the level of the toxicity is not yet known. A team of chemical experts from the Thai army concluded the material is not radioactive. Prince Norodom Ranariddh, president of the National Assembly, has said that a US\$3 million bribe was paid to government and port officials to allow the waste into the country.

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7. Ratification of START II

Reuters (Ivan Rodin, "START-2 PACT ON DUMA '99 PLAN BUT FATE IN FOG," Moscow, 12/22/98) and the Washington Post (David Hoffman, "RUSSIAN PARLIAMENT DELAYS WORK ON START II TREATY," 12/23/98, 16) reported that the Russian Duma has kept a ratification debate on the START II nuclear arms reduction treaty on its agenda for 1999, despite criticism of US strikes against Iraq. Vladimir Ryzhkov, first deputy speaker of the State Duma, said Tuesday that inclusion of the debate in the spring session starting on January 12 "signals [the Duma's] intention to continue work on this international treaty." He added, however, "The document is on the agenda but there is no guarantee that it will be ratified or discussed during the spring session." Duma speaker Gennady Seleznyov said Tuesday, "By giving the order to bomb Iraq, the U.S. president and British prime minister raised a serious obstacle on the path to ratification of START-2. We are now not reviewing this document." However Roman Popkovich, chairman of the Duma defense committee, stated, "The postponement [of debate] is in no way linked to the bombardment of Iraq... We had received the government's feasibility study for the development of the strategic nuclear forces and we needed time to study those materials." He added that he was convinced "Russia is more than anyone interested in the pact." Popkovich said that the Duma could debate the ratification in the second half of February. [Ed. note: This article was carried in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service.]

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8. US-Pakistan Fighter Dispute

The Associated Press ("U.S. STRIKES DEAL WITH PAKISTAN ON DECADE-OLD SALE OF F-16S," Washington, 12/23/98) reported that US officials said that the US and Pakistan have worked out an agreement under which Pakistan will be compensated for US-made F-16 fighter planes that it bought but never received. In exchange, Pakistan will withdraw its claim to the planes. The officials said that New Zealand has agreed to lease or buy all of the aircraft, with all proceeds to be used to reimburse the US Treasury for the money paid to Pakistan. Pakistan also will receive US\$2.3 million from the US Defense Department as a refund from a prior sale of some of the equipment associated with the F-16s. US President Bill Clinton said in a White House statement, "I have long sought an equitable solution to this difficult problem, and I am pleased that Prime Minister Sharif and I have been able to reach agreement."

II. People's Republic of China

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1. ROK Contributions to US Military Costs

China Daily ("ROK TO PAY LESS FOR KEEPING US TROOPS," Seoul, 12/23/98, A11) reported that the ROK's contribution to the cost of maintaining 35,000 US troops in the country will decrease to US\$333 million next year from US\$399 million in 1998, the US Forces Korea (USFK) said on December 22. The USFK said in a statement that the ROK and the US had negotiated a new "Special Measures Agreement" for the 1999-2001 period, in which the ROK would shoulder less of a burden of the estimated annual US\$1.33 billion price tag for keeping US troops in the ROK. The ROK Defense Ministry said that out of the US\$333 million, payment of US\$40 million would be deferred to the following year. About 57 percent of the ROK's contributions will be paid in the local currency, the ROK Defense Ministry said, leaving US\$141.2 million to be paid in US dollars.

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2. Sinking of DPRK Submarine

People's Daily ("DPRK DENIES HAVING ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE SUBMARINE INCIDENT," Pyongyang, 12/21/98, A6) reported that a DPRK spokesman for the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland said on December 18 that the so-called "submarine incident" off the southern coast of the ROK had nothing to do with the DPRK. The DPRK can no longer remain a passive onlooker to such actions of South Korea and will take resolute measures so that the provokers may drink a bitter cup, the DPRK spokesman said.

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3. PRC-US Relations

China Daily ("CPC WILLING TO FORGE TIES WITH TWO US PARTIES," 12/23/98, A1) reported that the Communist Party of China (CPC) reaffirmed its commitment to forging ties with other foreign political parties, including the US Republican and Democratic parties. Dai Bingguo, a leading Party official, said on December 22 that relations between the US parties and the CPC hinge on the willingness of all sides to cooperate. Although the CPC has made similar overtures before, this represents the reinforcement of a significant development in Sino-US relations, the newspaper said.

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4. PRC View on International Situation

China Daily ("MILITARY INTERFERENCE A THREAT," 12/22/98, A1) reported that a high-ranking PRC military official warned on December 21 that the increasing use of military interference by some powers is threatening world peace. "To reach their own goals, they tend to take unilateral military action toward their opponents, disregarding the authority of international organizations such as the United Nations," said Xiong Guangkai, deputy chief of the general staff of the People's Liberation Army. He spoke at a seminar held by the China Institute for International Strategic Studies in Beijing. While there were few actual military conflicts, Xiong cautioned that great attention should be paid to military intervention by certain powers. He did not name any country specifically.

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5. PRC Launch of US Satellites

Jie Fang Daily ("CHINA SUCCESSFULLY SEND US SATELLITES INTO ORBIT," Taiyuan, 12/20/98, A1) reported that the PRC sent two US-made satellites into planned orbit on December 19. It is the fifth consecutive successful mission of the improved Long March 2C rocket for the Iridium program within a year, the report said.

III. Announcements

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1. Job Opportunity

The Asia Monitor Resource Center (AMRC), a regional non-governmental organization focusing in labor issues in Asia, is seeking applicants for the position of full time Research Coordinator in the field of Asian labor and development. Responsibilities include: planning and budgeting research projects, liaising with project partners, organizing training workshops, overseeing implementation of AMRC's projects, and writing research projects. The position requires experience in working in a trade union, non-governmental organization or with Asian labor and/or development issues; strong English communication and writing skills; experience in planning and implementing research projects; and a strong foundation in labor-related issues. One Asian language is preferred. Interested parties should send a cover letter and resume postmarked by January 15, 1999 to: Apo Leung, Director, Asia Monitor Resource Center, 444 Nathan Road, 8-B, Kowloon, Hong Kong. (Fax: +852 2385-5319; Tel: +852 2332-1346; E-mail: amrc@hk.super.net or alarm@hk.super.net)

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.

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