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I. United States

1. US-DPRK Relations

The Los Angeles Times ("U.S. MAY SEND ENVOY TO N. KOREA ASIA," 02/22/99) reported that the US government may send former US Defense Secretary William J. Perry to the DPRK in what would be a high-profile effort to try to resolve disputes over that nation's nuclear and missile programs, according to US officials. Such a visit would be the most significant and high-level contact between the US and the DPRK since former US President Jimmy Carter's similar journey in 1994. US State Department spokesman James Foley told reporters Tuesday that Perry "has no plans currently to visit there [the DPRK]." However, the possibility of such a trip was discussed last week at a meeting of senior administration officials, according to an administration source.

2. PRC Aid to DPRK Space Program

The Washington Times ("CHINA ASSISTS N KOREA IN SPACE LAUNCHES," 02/23/99) reported that, according to White House and Pentagon officials, the PRC is sharing space technology with the DPRK, a move that could boost the DPRK's long-range missile program. The space cooperation was discovered by the National Security Agency late last year and revealed to senior officials of President Bill Clinton's administration recently in an intelligence report. An official said there are worries about PRC- DPRK cooperation on space satellites, but so far US intelligence agencies haven't confirmed that the cooperation is linked to the development of the DPRK's Taepodong missile, which was test-fired for the first time August 31. PRC Embassy spokesman Cui Jianjun called reports of space cooperation with the DPRK "groundless." A Pentagon official said the cooperation, detected in late August or early September, included travel to the DPRK by scientists from the Chinese Academy of Launch Technology, which has worked in the past with US satellite manufacturers. The Pentagon has linked the launch academy, part of the Chinese defense- industry complex, to improper sharing of US satellite technology in 1995 by Hughes Space and Communications Company. [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for February 23]

3. DPRK Policy towards ROK

Reuters ("IRAN SAYS N.KOREA WANTS DIALOGUE WITH SEOUL," 02/19/99) reported that the Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) radio quoted visiting Iranian deputy foreign minister Mohsen Aminzadeh as saying that the DPRK wants to hold a political dialogue with ROK. Aminzadeh also said at a meeting with his ROK counterpart that the DPRK had asked him to convey such a willingness during his visit. ROK Foreign Ministry officials could not immediately be reached for comment.

4. ROK Amnesty to Prisoners

The Associate Press ("S. KOREA GRANTS AMNESTY TO SPIES," 02/22/99) reported that ROK president Kim Dae-jung approved a sweeping amnesty Monday for 1,508 prisoners. One amnesty was granted to Woo Yong-gak, 70, who is believed to be the world's longest-serving political prisoner. Woo, imprisoned for 41 years, was one of seventeen men convicted of spying for the DPRK to be freed under the special amnesty that will take effect Thursday, the first anniversary of President Kim Dae-jung's inauguration. In announcing the amnesty, Justice Minister Park Sang-cheon indicated the government may allow the DPRK nationals to return home in exchange for about 300 ROK prisoners of war captured during the 1950-53 Korean War and believed to be still held in the DPRK. The amnesty will also affect 7,304 people who were convicted of various crimes but have been out of prison on parole, who will have either their civil rights restored or their criminal records erased.

5. DPRK Demands Repatriation of Spies

The Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA DEMANDS RETURN OF SPIES," 02/23/99) reported that the DPRK renewed its demand Tuesday for the return of twenty men convicted of spying in the ROK, saying their repatriation would lead to improved relations. Seventeen of the men were among 1,508 prisoners granted amnesty by the ROK Monday [see previous item]. The DPRK had previously demanded the return of the three others, who had been released from prison under a previous amnesty. "Though belated, we think (Monday's) announcement is fortunate," the DPRK's Red Cross

Society said in a letter sent to its ROK counterpart today. The repatriation of the twenty prisoners "will be a landmark event in bringing a thaw in the frozen inter-Korean relations and clearing the way for wide-ranging dialogue and contact," said the letter, sent through the border village of Panmunjom.

6. PRC-US Relations

The New York Times ("CITING SECURITY, US SPURNS CHINA ON SATELLITE DEAL," 02/23/99) and The Washington Post ("U.S. LIKELY TO STOP CHINA SATELLITE DEAL," 02/23/99) reported that the Clinton administration has all but decided to cancel a US company's contract to sell a US$600 million satellite communications system to a PRC consortium because of fears that the PRC's military will use the network, according to US government and industry officials. Hughes Electronics Corp., which has been seeking US permission to launch its satellites in the PRC, said it has received no word on whether its planned Asia-Pacific Mobile Telecommunications (APMT) system will be approved. The US Commerce Department has supported the deal, but the Pentagon and the State Department have opposed it, fearing that the two-satellite network could improve communications among China's widely dispersed military units. [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for February 23]

7. India-Pakistan Nuclear Agreement

The Washington Post ("INDIA, PAKISTAN AGREE TO WORK TO EASE STRAINS TALKS ADDRESS NUCLEAR ARMS," 02/22/99) reported that India and Pakistan agreed today to work to reduce the risk of a nuclear war by exchanging strategic information about their arsenals and giving each other advance notice of ballistic-missile tests. The neighboring nations also pledged to intensify diplomatic efforts to resolve their central dispute over the Himalayan territory of Kashmir, as well as other differences. The contacts would include periodic meetings between foreign ministers and a proposed visit to India by Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The agreements came at the end of a weekend summit in Pakistan. Both countries reportedly were eager to make progress on their disputes, partly in response to the international pressure that followed their reciprocal nuclear tests last year.

II. Republic of Korea

1. ROK Policy towards DPRK

JoongAng Ilbo ("GOVERNMENT SOFTEN TERMINOLOGY TOWARDS DPRK," Seoul, 02/21/99) reported that the ROK government decided to soften its terminology describing DPRK policies and rhetoric, in order not to provoke the DPRK hard-liners. This change is intended to broaden inter-Korean economic cooperation by boosting the ROK government's "tolerance policy" toward DPRK. For example, terms "reform" and "openness" will be changed to "modernization," and the term "agricultural restructuring" will be replaced with "support to agricultural development". Lim Dong-won, top presidential aide on foreign affairs and security, commented, "If the DPRK dislikes the terms 'reform' or 'openness', we will use the term 'modernization". Some experts criticize the attitude of the ROK government toward the DPRK as being "too polite".

Chosun Ilbo ("DPRK ENCOURAGED INTO WORLD COMMUNITY," Seoul, 02/21/99) reported that the ROK government does not oppose other nations from normalizing relations with the DPRK, and will make this clear at an annual meeting of the heads of Korean missions abroad scheduled to be

held for four days, beginning Monday. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT) has set the agenda for the conference, which will include topics such as diplomacy oriented towards the peaceful coexistence of the ROK and the DPRK. MOFAT will also carry out consultations and information sessions on ROK government's comprehensive approach to forming relations with DPRK. One high-ranking MOFAT official said that the Foreign Ministry will ask the ROK diplomats to urge governments which do not yet have formal diplomatic ties with the DPRK to actively work to open official channels of communication with the DPRK.

2. ROK Military Budget

Chosun Ilbo ("MILITARY BUDGET TO BE SPENT EARLY," Seoul, 02/22/99) reported that the Ministry of National Defense has decided to implement the majority of its defense-related projects in the first half of the year to help improve the nation's economy and reduce the unemployment rate. W4.55 trillion of this year's W5.6 trillion budget for importation of weapons and facility construction projects will be spent before July. A high-ranking official at the ministry said that the budget also includes the construction of apartments for army personnel. An additional 50,000 new jobs will also be created.

3. ROK Amnesty for Prisoners

Chosun Ilbo ("AMNESTY FOR 8,000 ON INAUGURATION ANNIVERSARY," Seoul, 02/21/99) reported that President Kim Dae-jung will grant a large-scale special amnesty and release some 8,000 prisoners on February 25 to mark the one-year anniversary of his presidential inauguration. The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) announced Sunday that, following passage of the amnesty proposal by the cabinet on Monday, it would make public the list of the prisoners to be released. Those to be released will include those who have violated the controversial National Security Law and those imprisoned for breaking demonstration and labor laws. Of the total number of prisoners due to be released, some 1,500 will be released on parole, including seventeen political prisoners who have refused to renounce their communist beliefs. Also to be fully reinstated are former student activist Im Soo-kyung, pastor Moon Kyu-hyun, former National Assembly member Seo Kyung-won and novelist Hwang Suk-young, all of whom were imprisoned by previous government administrations for making unauthorized visits to the DPRK.

4. DPRK Demands Repatriation

Korea Herald ("DPRK CALLS FOR REPATRIATION OF PRISONERS," Seoul, 02/24/99) reported that the DPRK yesterday demanded that the ROK repatriate a group of communist political prisoners soon to be released in a special presidential amnesty. The DPRK also suggested that it may take corresponding action when it said their return to the DPRK would help improve inter-Korean relations. The ROK government plans to announce what to do with the prisoners soon after consultations with relevant agencies. The DPRK made the demand in a letter sent by Jang Jae-on, who heads the DPRK's Red Cross society, which was delivered to his southern counterpart Chung Won-shik. "It is coming belatedly, but we think it is a fortunate development," the DPRK said in the letter. "If the ROK releases all these kinds of prisoners and sends them back to their families, it will serve as an important occasion in opening various (inter-Korean) contacts and in thawing the frozen inter-Korean relations," it said.

5. ROK-Japan Fishery Talks

Korea Herald ("FISHING BOATS TO RESUME OPERATIONS IN JAPANESE WATERS," Seoul, 02/22/99) reported that the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (MOMAF) said that ROK fishing vessels will resume operations in Japan's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) today, following a month-long suspension. The MOMAF said that 957 ROK fishing boats, including 84 large trawlers, will be allowed to fish in the Japanese waters. Under the new ROK-Japan fisheries accord, which was fully implemented February 6, a total of 1,567 ROK fishing vessels can now operate in Japanese waters this year, while 1,575 Japanese boats will be allowed to fish in the ROK waters. The new pact calls for the ROK and Japanese fisheries authorities to notify the other side of the list of fishing vessels with permission. Under the new accord, the ROK must reduce its total fishing catches in Japan's EEZ from 220,000 tons per year to 149,000 tons this year, while Japan is required to cut its total catches from 110,000 tons to 93,700 tons. "The remaining 608 fishing vessels will be able to operate in Japanese waters during fishing seasons," said a ministry spokesman. Meanwhile, MOMAF said Japan freed the two ROK fishing vessels it seized earlier last week for violating the EEZ, northeast of Taiwan, Friday evening.

6. New Northeast Asian Tourist Route

Korea Herald ("TWO KOREAS TO OPEN TOURIST ROUTE WITH PRC," Seoul, 02/24/99) reported that the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency said yesterday that a new international tourist route linking the ROK and the DPRK with the PRC will likely be opened in May. In a report on the prospects for a Northeast Asian transportation infrastructure, the state- run agency forecasted that the ROK, DPRK and PRC governments may be able to eliminate the remaining hurdles to the three-nation overland tourist route by May. Opening the new tourist route, which may link Tonghae in the ROK, Rajin in the DPRK and Hunchun in the PRC, will also exert pervasive effects on economic exchanges between the three countries, the KOTRA report said. "With the mediation of the United Nations Development Program, the three nations reached a tentative agreement on port usage, customs, passenger safety and other details," it said.

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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International Policy Studies Institute Seoul, Republic of Korea
The Center for Global Communications, Tokyo, Japan
Center for American Studies,
Fudan University, Shanghai, People's Republic of China

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

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

Lee Dong-young: UNPOL@netsgo.com
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

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