NAPSNet Daily Report 23 January, 1998

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report 23 January, 1998", NAPSNet Daily Report, January 23, 1998, https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-23-january-1998/

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I. United States

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1. Four-Party Peace Talks

The Associated Press ("U.S. AND S. KOREA DISCUSS N. KOREA," Seoul, 01/22/98) reported that ROK foreign ministry officials said that US Assistant Secretary of State Stanley Roth met Thursday with ROK Assistant Foreign Minister Song Young-shik to discuss the light-water reactor project and the four-party peace talks. The officials also said that the ROK will continue providing food aid to the DPRK.

State Department Spokesman James Rubin ("STATE DEPARTMENT NOON BRIEFING," USIA Transcript, 01/22/98) said Thursday that the election of a new president in the ROK will have an effect on Korean unification issues. Rubin stated, "He has some views of his own. But the four-party talks are still the basis for how we believe that some of the problems can be resolved there and a final armistice agreement can be achieved."

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2. DPRK Famine

The Associated Press (John Diamond, "SENATOR: N.KOREA WARLIKE BUT POOR," Washington, 01/22/98) reported that US Senator Carl Levin, D-Mich., returned from a visit to the DPRK, describing it as "a basket-case country." He added that the DPRK remains militaristic despite the famine conditions. Levin stated, "Every conversation with the North Koreans was punctuated by their need for food." He added that he assured DPRK officials that US famine relief would be "substantial and prompt." Regarding the government's hold on power, Levin stated, "Do I see any evidence of that society unraveling? No. I wish I did. I saw evidence of a society that, from my perspective, is in extremis. But I guess they're used to it." He added that the ROK's economic crisis could have an impact on security if the ROK were to ask the US to pay a greater share of the cost of building the light-water nuclear reactor in the DPRK. Levin also pointed to the DPRK's extreme isolation as a key factor blocking progress in normalizing relations with the US and the ROK.

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3. Interview with Kim Dae-jung

Reuters ("KIM DAE-JUNG SAYS S.KOREA NOW BETTER ABLE TO COPE," Tokyo, 01/23/98) reported that ROK President-elect Kim Dae-jung, in an interview with Japan's Asahi Shimbun published Friday, blamed the ROK's economic problems on a lack of democracy in the past, but added that his country was now better-equipped to cope. He stated, "We lacked the mechanism to publicly debate solutions to our economic weaknesses and problems." Regarding ROK-DPRK relations, Kim said, "We want to reopen dialogue with North Korea, but because we've got no response from the North at this point, we can't move unilaterally." However, he added, "We're not at this point pursuing unification. This is a time for pursuing peaceful coexistence."

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4. ROK Financial Crisis

The Wall Street Journal, (Michael Schuman, "TRANSITION TEAM WILL INVESTIGATE CAUSE OF KOREA'S ECONOMIC CRISIS," Seoul, 01/23/98) reported that Lee Jong-chan, the head of ROK President-elect Kim Dae-jung's transition team, said Thursday that poor monitoring of banks and large conglomerates by the current government was a key cause of the ROK's economic crisis. Lee asserted that complaints and warnings from low-ranking government workers about a potential foreign-currency problem were ignored and not reported to top policy makers. He added that the National Assembly will likely hold hearings after his team completes its investigation of the causes of

the crisis. However, he emphasized that there will be no punitive element to the investigation.

The Associated Press ("SOUTH KOREA COLLECTS MORE THAN 100 TONS OF GOLD," Seoul, 01/23/98) reported that ROK citizens have contributed at least 100 tons of gold worth US$1 billion to a campaign aimed at obtaining needed foreign currency. About half of the collected gold has been melted down and exported.

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5. Japan-ROK Fisheries Dispute

The Associated Press (Yuri Kageyama, "JAPAN SCRAPS S. KOREA FISHING PACT," Tokyo, 01/23/98) reported that Japan scrapped the 1965 fishing accord with the ROK on Friday after talks to renew it deadlocked. However, Japanese Foreign Minister Keizo Obuchi said that Japan will continue "to work earnestly on the negotiations." ROK Foreign Ministry spokesman Lee Kyu-hyong responded, "It's a very unfriendly act that Japan, as a neighboring country, has unilaterally abolished the accord because its excessive demand was not accepted." He added that the ROK would allow its boats to fish freely in Japan's coastal waters. The ROK National Assembly also passed a bill demanding that the ROK ambassador to Japan be recalled. ROK fishermen and activists said they planned an anti-Japanese rally in Seoul on Saturday. Foreign Minister Yoo Chong-ha said that "a cooling-off" period would be necessary before any talks can be resumed, but added that the government has no plan to recall its ambassador to Japan. Chung Dong-young, a spokesman for President-elect Kim Dae-jung, stated, "The Japanese action is not desirable for the future of both countries. We believe that the fisheries accord is an issue that should be resolved through dialogue and negotiations, not an issue that can be resolved through forceful measures."

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6. Downing of KAL 007

Los Angeles Times ("RUSSIAN CHIEF ORDERED SHOOTING," Moscow, 01/23/98) reported that the Russian Air Force acknowledged Friday that its new chief, General Anatoly Kornukov, was the commander who ordered a pilot to shoot down an ROK passenger jet, KAL Flight 007, off Sakhalin Island in 1983. Kornukov, who was appointed by President Boris Yeltsin on Tuesday, was commander of air defenses on Sakhalin Island at the time of the shooting. The Soviets suspected that the jet was spying on a top-secret Soviet defense installation.

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7. US-PRC Relations

Reuters (Charles Aldinger, "COHEN: U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS ON 'POSITIVE TRACK'," Washington, 01/22/98) reported that US Defense Secretary William Cohen said Thursday that US relations with the PRC were "on a very positive track" and would continue to improve. He added that a planned second summit between PRC President Jiang Zemin and US President Bill Clinton in Beijing later this year would deepen ties. He stated that he was especially pleased by his visit to a previously-secret air defense center in Beijing and a promise that the PRC would immediately halt all sales of C-801 and C-802 anti-ship cruise missiles to Iran.

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8. Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

Reuters ("HELMS THREATENS TO STALL NUCLEAR WEAPONS TREATY," Washington, 01/23/98) reported that US Senator Jesse Helms, R-NC, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said Thursday that he would stall action on a nuclear weapons test ban treaty until the Clinton administration submits the Kyoto global warming treaty and amendments to the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty to the Senate. Helms said that, because of "growing danger posed by rogue states possessing weapons of mass destruction, it is vital that the Senate conduct a thorough review of the ABM Treaty this year." The administration has said it will delay submitting the global warming treaty to the Senate until developing countries have agreed to join.

II. Republic of Korea

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1. ROK Budget Cuts

President-elect Kim Dae-jung on Thursday reaffirmed his support for the continued presence of the US forces on the Korean peninsula even after the unification of the two Koreas. In a meeting with US Secretary of Defense William Cohen, Kim said that the stationing of US forces after unification is necessary for the peace and balance of power in Northeast Asia. On the other hand, Cohen expressed concern over the ROK's economic difficulties, which could adversely affect the ROK's scheduled arms procurement programs from US defense industries. Cohen asked the president-elect not to drastically reduce the ROK's defense budget. (Korea Times, "KIM CALLS FOR CONTINUED PRESENCE OF US FORCES AFTER REUNIFICATION," 01/23/98)

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2. DPRK Nuclear Development

An ROK Foreign Ministry official said on January 22 that an alleged underground nuclear facility in the DPRK was already proven to be unrelated to nuclear activities. According to some press reports, the DPRK possesses an underground military facility in the Hagab region of Chagang-do that is believed to be a site for the production of plutonium or the assembly of nuclear weapons. "The ROK and the US have known of the existence of such facilities for a long time. However, we believe they are not nuclear facilities," the official said in a background briefing. The official refused to reveal the exact nature of the Hagab underground facility. (Korea Times, "EXISTENCE OF NEW NUKE SITE IN NK DENIED," 01/23/98)

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3. Four-Party Peace Talks

ROK and US officials agreed on January 22 to exhibit "flexibility" when they meet their DPRK counterparts in Beijing next month to discuss the modalities of four-party peace talks, an ROK Foreign Ministry official said. ROK Deputy Foreign Minister Song Young-shik met visiting US Assistant Secretary of State Stanley Roth at the foreign ministry to exchange views on the four-party talks, additional grain aid to the DPRK, and other bilateral issues. The Beijing talks are expected to take place on February 12-14 to make preparatory steps for the second round of four-party talks, slated for March in Geneva. (Korea Times, "SEOUL, WASHINGTON TO TAKE `FLEXIBLE' POSTURE IN BEIJING TALKS," 01/23/98)

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4. DPRK Food Aid

The ROK government said on January 22 that it will postpone all governmental and civilian food aid to the DPRK until after the new Kim Dae-jung administration is sworn in. "The government will contribute to the latest World Food Program's (WFP) 650 thousand ton-food appeal, but the amount will be decided by the incoming administration," a government official said. (Korea Herald, "GOVERNMENT PUTS OFF DPRK AID DECISION," 01/23/98)

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5. ROK-Japan Fisheries Dispute

Japan notified ROK President-elect Kim Dae-jung that it will scrap its fisheries agreement with the ROK on January 23. The ROK Foreign Ministry also received a similar message from Nobutake Otano, a minister at the Japanese embassy in Seoul, who visited Ryu Kwang-sok, director general of the Asia-Pacific Affairs Bureau. The ROK government and the government transfer committee are moving to work out "tough" measures against the Japanese government's unilateral action, heralding an intensified diplomatic row between the neighboring countries. The measures may include, among others, the nullification of an agreement on self-controlled fishing, officials said. (Korea Times, "JAPAN NOTIFIES PLAN TO SCRAP FISHERY AGREEMENT UNILATERALLY," 01/23/98)

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6. Kim Dae-jung to Visit Russia

ROK President-elect Kim Dae-jung will pay a brief visit to Moscow in April en route from Britain, a senior Russian foreign ministry official told ITAR-TASS news agency on January 21. However, Aman Irgebayev, head of the foreign ministry's Korea Department, did not give any more details about Kim's visit. (Korea Times, "KIM DJ TO VISIT RUSSIA IN APRIL:AFP," 01/23/98)

III. Japan

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1. Japan-ROK Fisheries Dispute

The Nikkei Shimbun (Ichiro Ishikawa, "GOVERNMENT SENT ROK LETTER OF 'TERMINATION OF JAPAN-ROK FISHERY AGREEMENT'," Seoul, 01/23/98) reported that, with the negotiations on revision of the Japan-ROK Fishery Agreement in deadlock, the Japanese government will decide on January 23 to send the ROK government a letter of "termination of the 1965 Japan-ROK Fishery Agreement." The report pointed out that although the Japanese government wants to renew the negotiations with President-elect Kim Dae-jung's administration, the ROK's opposition will be inevitable.

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2. Interview with Kim Dae-jung

The Asahi Shimbun ("ASAHI SHIMBUN INTERVIEWS ROK PRESIDENT-ELECT KIM DAE-JUNG," Seoul, 01/23/98) reported that in the Asahi Shimbun's interview with ROK President-elect Kim Dae-jung, Kim emphasized that the ROK needs to value security, economy, and democracy as a set, implying criticism of the previous administrations for stressing only security and economy. With

regard to the prospects for economic recovery, he said that such measures as introduction of foreign investment under the IMF's supervision may help the ROK economy recover after the middle of 1999. Turning to ROK-DPRK relations, he expressed the need for a careful approach because both sides have just undergone administrative changes. Regarding Japan's decision to terminate the 1965 Japan-ROK Fishery Agreement, he said, "It is humiliating for the ROK, which is becoming a democracy for the first time in fifty years. The agreement will remain effective for one year after the termination. If Japan wants to resume the negotiations, there is no reason for Japan to terminate it now." With regard to regional security, he emphasized the importance of the US military presence in the ROK. He also expressed his desire to establish a collective security framework in Northeast Asia, modeled on the Helsinki Treaty, which may consist of not only the ROK, Japan, the US, and Russia, but Mongolia as well.

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3. US Military Bases

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("PRIME MINISTER CONCERNS IMPACT OF OKINAWA GOVERNOR'S REFUSAL OF ALTERNATIVE HELIPORT ON RETURN OF FUTENMA BASE," 01/22/98) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto on January 21 expressed his concern that Okinawa Governor Masahide Ohota's refusal to build an alternative heliport off US Camp Schwab may leave Futenma Base as it is, making it difficult to solve the US base problem. He also suggested that if the Okinawa prefecture offers changes in the on-going solution to the problem, prospective economic development initiatives for Okinawa may have to be reconsidered, indicating the possibility of the government withdrawing the regional development plans.

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4. Japan-Russia Peace Talks

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("RUSSIA PROPOSES JOINT ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES TO JAPAN," 01/23/98) reported that Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Grigory Karasin, at a Japanese-Russian high-ranking foreign ministry officials' meeting in Moscow on January 22, proposed to his Japanese counterpart Minoru Tanba the establishment of a Japan-Russia joint economic development program in the Northern Territories. In response, the Japanese side suggested that it is important not to hurt each other's positions, indicating that Japan will carefully consider the proposal. Japan, in turn, demanded that investigation on unidentified tombs of Japanese civilians be started in April. Russia responded, "We will consider the matter positively," according to the report.

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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