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I. United States

1. DPRK Rocket Launch

The Associated Press ("JAPAN PM SAYS HE EXPECTS NO MORE MISSILE TESTING BY N KOREA," Tokyo, 03/23/99) reported that Japanese government officials on Tuesday quoted Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi as saying that he expects the DPRK to conduct no more missile test-firing. Obuchi said that he is certain that the DPRK understands Japan's concerns and that he does not expect the DPRK to launch another rocket. He added, "We expect North Korea to be flexible and responsive to Japanese concerns so Japan can further cooperate in the North's energy issues." Akitaka Saiki, a

government spokesman, said that Obuchi's remarks seemed to have been intended as a warning to the DPRK.

2. Japanese Naval Engagement

Reuters (Yvonne Chang, "JAPAN FIRES WARNING SHOTS AT INTRUDING SHIPS," Tokyo, 03/23/99) reported that Japanese maritime officials said that Japanese patrol boats chased and fired warning shots at two suspected DPRK ships on Tuesday. The officials said that nine patrol boats, three aircraft, and three destroyers were pursuing the ships in international waters late Tuesday. Defense officials said that the unidentified ships were found in Japanese waters but ignored orders to stop and continued fleeing after shots were fired. Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi called an emergency meeting of key cabinet ministers. Obuchi stated after the meeting, "We will take any measures necessary. I am awaiting more details from the Maritime Safety Agency and the Maritime Self-Defense Forces." Transport Minister Jiro Kawasaki told a news conference that one of the ships carried the name of a Japanese ship that was located elsewhere and the other carried the name of a ship no longer in operation. One vessel was found off Noto Peninsula in Ishikawa Prefecture Tuesday morning, and the other near Sado Island off Niigata Prefecture in the afternoon. Japan last fired warning shots in August 20, 1953, after a Soviet spy ship had entered Japanese waters.

3. US Food Aid for DPRK

US State Department Deputy Spokesman James Foley ("STATE DEPT. NOON BRIEFING, MARCH 22, 1999," USIA Transcript, 03/22/99) announced the US Government has decided to provide additional humanitarian assistance in the amount of 100,000 metric tons of food aid to the DPRK, to help fill the remaining 209,000 ton shortfall in the World Food Program's last appeal. Foley stated, "This US Government assistance, sourced from PL 480, Title II, Emergency Food Aid and 416 B, Surplus Agricultural Commodities, will be provided to the World Food Program for distribution to the DPRK. Commodities for this contribution will include corn-soy blend and corn." He added, "we will, as with previous appeals, actively encourage contributions from other donors with the objective of fulfilling this appeal in a timely manner." Foley said that, during recent US-DPRK talks, "the North Koreans raised their food requirements or needs in this area. We responded to them that we do not accept linkage between this humanitarian issue and other issues, and that we would deal with the World Food Program on the basis of their appeals."

Reuters (Carol Giacomo, "U.S. TO SEND NEW FOOD AID TO N. KOREA," Washington, 03/22/99) reported that the US Agency for International Development announced that the US will give $30 million for 100,000 metric tons of corn and rice to feed people engaged in planting potatoes in the DPRK and follow-on projects such as reclamation. US private voluntary organizations will contribute US$2 million for several varieties of seed potatoes from Idaho and China, plus fertilizer, pesticide and fungicide. A US official said that a US technical team could leave as early as this weekend for the DPRK to work out details for the project. He added that the project plans to plant 1,000 metric tons of seed potatoes by the end of May. He said that the project will concentrate on mountainous northeast provinces hardest hit by the famine where there is very little arable land, and that it is expected to yield "significant additional food production in North Korea." Unnamed US officials said that the DPRK lacks seeds and fertilizers but also suffers from a system stressing corn and rice growing on land that should not have been used for that purpose. Officials said that US provisions of food aid to the DPRK reflect a new US interest in showing the DPRK the tangible benefits of cooperating with the US on nuclear and missile issues. The officials said that the World Food Program would make a new appeal for food aid in May to which the US would respond positively. They added that the remaining US 1998 food donation is due to arrive in the DPRK on April 25. An

anonymous senior US official said that the DPRK famine is "a major disaster with perhaps the greatest loss of life of any humanitarian emergency this decade."

4. DPRK Diplomat's Defection

Dow Jones Newswires ("N. KOREA RELEASES FUGITIVE DIPLOMAT'S SON - KYODO," Bangkok, 03/23/99) reported that Japan's Kyodo news service said that the DPRK on Tuesday handed over to Thai authorities Hong Won- myong, the son of former DPRK diplomat Hong Sun-kyong. DPRK special envoy Li Do-sop said in a statement that the release of Hong was in line with the desire to cooperate with Thailand and in the "noble spirit of humanitarianism." Li added, "It is based on the constant policy of our republic, valuing the friendship of the two countries." At a press conference on Tuesday, Hong Won-myong said that he wants to return to Pyongyang. He stated, "I want to go back to my country. I want to be a patriot, not a betrayer. Therefore, if my mom and dad think it's right, they should follow me and go back." He added, "I believe in my country, and that my country will forgive whoever admits their wrongdoing. I am confident that I will be given a chance." He said that he would wait for his parents at the DPRK Embassy in Bangkok as he hopes they will return to Pyongyang with him. He stated, "They're my parents. I love them. I want to live with them. But if they don't wish that, then I don't know what to do about them." He said that he and his parents had not intended to defect, pointing out that they had not sought asylum at the ROK Embassy as in other defection cases.

5. Recovery of DPRK Submarine

The Associated Press ("S. KOREA FINDS FOUR MORE BODIES IN SUNKEN N. KOREAN SPY BOAT," Seoul, 03/23/99) reported that the ROK Defense Ministry said Tuesday that four more bodies have been found in a DPRK spy boat that was recovered last week, bringing the total number to six.

6. PRC Views of US Missile Defense

The Associated Press ("CHINA CRITICIZES US MISSILE SHIELD," Beijing, 03/23/99) reported that PRC spokesman Sun Yuxi on Tuesday said that a US anti-missile system would set back efforts for nuclear disarmament. Noting that "America has the largest and most sophisticated nuclear arsenal in the world," Sun argued, "This will directly affect the nuclear disarmament process and will exert far-reaching and extensive impact on the global strategic balance and stability of the 21st century." Sun also denied a report in Newsweek magazine that the PRC had managed to acquire two unexploded US cruise missiles from a raid on purported terrorist camps in Afghanistan last summer, calling the report "a fabrication."

7. US-PRC Environmental Cooperation

The Associated Press ("US-CHINA ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION SHOULD CONTINUE - OFFICIAL," Beijing, 03/23/99) reported that Carol Browner, head of the US Environmental Protection Agency, said Tuesday that tensions over spying allegations should not stop the US from working with the PRC to tackle its pollution problems. Browner met Friday with PRC Premier Zhu Rongji as part of her nine-day trip to China. She stated, "China is a country where we have both deep disagreements and common interests, and I think we would all agree that protecting our environment, the global environment, is a common interest. There is much that we can do together."

8. US Missile Defense

The American Physical Society issued a Press Release ("PENTAGON TO BUILD NATIONAL DEFENSE SYSTEM BY 2010," Atlanta, 03/22/99) which said that Hans Mark, the Director for Defense Research and Engineering at the US Department of Defense, said that there is no question that the US can build a workable national missile defense system. Mark stated, "by definition this is feasible and it can be built." He predicted that the US will be able to deploy the first elements of this system between 2008 and 2010. However, Representative Rush Holt (D-NJ) said that the technological and scientific feasibility of the system remains largely unproved. Holt stated, "Wishing won't overrule physics.... Simple strategic analysis will tell us that provocative yet permeable defenses are destabilizing and they lead to reduced security. In fact, the more technically affected the system turned out to be, the worse the idea would be because of its increase in instability and the damage done to our efforts to reduce Russia's weapons."

9. Russian Ratification of START II

The Associated Press (Vladimir Isachenkov, "YELTSON [sic] OKS BILL ON START II TREATY," Moscow, 03/22/99) reported that Russian President Boris Yeltsin has given his approval to a bill by Russian lawmakers that could help pave the way for the ratification of the START II arms reduction treaty. The bill calls for Russia to ratify START II on condition that the US does not alter the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty. Yeltsin's spokesman Dmitry Yakushkin said that the president has agreed to proposals by lawmakers and has sent a letter to the Duma on Monday. Vladimir Lukin, the head of the Duma's foreign affairs committee, stated, "Chances for the START II ratification now are higher than any time in the past."

II. Republic of Korea

1. Defection of DPRK Diplomat

Chosun Ilbo ("THAILAND EXPELS SIX NK DIPLOMATS," Seoul, 03/23/99) reported that the Thai government decided Tuesday to expel six DPRK embassy staff based in Bangkok, demanding that the six leave Thailand within 72 hours from 10 am Tuesday. Thai Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan announced in the morning that his government had resolved, following serious consideration, to expel the six for involvement in the kidnapping attempt of the embassy's former member Hong Sun-kyong and his family. The minister added that his government had decided the measures were appropriate to the actions of the DPRK citizens. A high-ranking foreign ministry official commented that of the eleven involved in the attempted abduction, the remaining five will be subject to the Thai legal system. He added that kidnapping is a criminal act not covered by diplomatic immunity under Thai law and completely inconsistent with diplomatic behavior. The 22 year-old Won-myong, son of Hong, detained at the DPRK embassy, was to be released at 6:00pm on Tuesday, according to foreign ministry sources.

2. Recovery of DPRK Spy Boat

Korea Herald ("FOUR BODIES, NUMEROUS WEAPONS FOUND INSIDE NK SPY BOAT," Seoul, 03/24/99) reported that the ROK Defense Ministry said that four bodies, not two as previously believed, and hundreds of weapons and ammunition were retrieved from inside a salvaged DPRK spy boat lifted out of waters off the south coast. The ROK media had originally said that two bodies were suspected to be inside the boat after it was raised 150-meters from the sea last Wednesday by the

ROK Navy. The ministry announcement brings the body count for the boat's crew now to six. Two other bodies had been found earlier. The first one was found floating in the South Sea on December 18 when the spy vessel went down after being hit by ROK Nay fire during an overnight chase. The second body was discovered on January 22 by Navy divers at the bottom of the sea, with its leg tied by a rope to the sunken boat. The Defense Ministry said the spy vessel, an upgraded SP-10H model, belongs to the Operations Department of the DPRK Workers' Party.

Chosun Ilbo ("W11.16 MILLION FOUND IN NK SPY BOAT," Seoul, 03/23/99) reported that the joint chiefs of staff headquarters announced Tuesday that W11.16 million and Y1 million were recovered from the DPRK semi- submersible spy craft sunk at the end of last year. An official said that the presence of money indicated that a pay-off was probably going to be made. Also found were Czech made silenced machine pistols, hand grenades, an RPG-7 rocket launcher, several suicide ampoules and a further seventy-five different types of equipment. The official said that the craft was an improved type sporting GPS and capable of submerging down to twenty meters while carrying a crew of six to eight. It belonged to the operations department of the Nampo Workers' Party Office. From the amount of equipment, it is guessed that there were four crew and between two to four infiltrators on board.

3. US-DPRK Agricultural Cooperation

JoongAng Ilbo ("U.S. TO SUPPORT NORTH KOREA'S PRODUCTION OF POTATOES," Seoul, 03/23/99) reported that the US announced on March 23 that it has decided to push ahead to support the DPRK's production of potatoes in three regions. It decided to send an agricultural advisory team to the DPRK because the US and the DPRK agreed to allow an inspection of Kumchangri, the suspected nuclear site. The US also said that it will offer 100,000 tons of corn and rice to the DPRK, cooperating with the private volunteer organization. It stated that an agricultural advisory team, consisting of agricultural professionals, will visit the DPRK at the end of this weekend and negotiate the production of potatoes. The US plans to offer fertilizer and insecticide needed to produce potatoes in the DPRK. This is the first agricultural cooperation between the US and the DPRK, which is worthy of attention as it may lead to an easing or removal of US economic sanctions against the DPRK.

4. DPRK Fertilizer Shortage

JoongAng Ilbo ("NK NEEDS 1.5 MILLION TONS OF FERTILIZERS A YEAR," Seoul, 03/22/99) reported that the DPRK needs 1.5 millions tons of fertilizer, about 10 times the 170,000 tons of fertilizer it now produces according to domestic analysts' estimate. Although the DPRK is only producing 170,000 tons of fertilizer, its full production capacity is about 3.80 millions tons. The DPRK is estimated to have fallen short about one million tons of its fertilizer needed for last year, even though it received 270,000 tons of fertilizer from foreign countries. The DPRK's drop in fertilizer production stems from outmoded fertilizer factories and a chronic shortage of raw materials and energy. Among fertilizer factories in the DPRK, Heungnam fertilizer factory partly operates, but Namheung and Aoji factories produce only a very small fraction of their capacity. The DPRK is especially unable to produce nitrogen-based fertilizer, which is essential for crop production.

5. Mt. Kumgang Tour

JoongAng Ilbo ("TOURISTS TO MT. KUMGANG FACING FINES BY NK," Seoul, 03/23/99) reported

that the ROK government and Hyundai are in trouble because the DPRK has imposed US$15-30 fines on numerous Mt. Kumgang tourists whom they contend contaminated or harmed Mt. Kumgang's natural resources. According to the ROK Ministry of Unification (MOU), the estimated number of cases of tourists fined by the DPRK only reached 19 at a total amount of US$540 so far. However, considering Hyundai recently sent letters to 288 travel agencies, which advised agencies to caution tourists on their conduct, the problem is believed to be larger than officials have disclosed. Hyundai explained that tourists have paid large amounts of fines to the DPRK that were far more than MOU has calculated.

6. DPRK Human Rights

Korea Times ("HONG TO RAISE NK RIGHTS ISSUE IN UN MEET," Seoul, 03/23/99) reported that ROK Foreign Affairs-Trade Minister Hong Soon-young, who left for Geneva Tuesday to attend a UN Human Rights Commission meeting, is expected to call on the international community to pay more attention to the DPRK's human rights situation. As the Kim Dae-jung administration has repeatedly stressed the importance of global efforts to improve human rights, Minister Hong will shed light on many DPRK-related human rights issues when he delivers a special address to the 55th meeting of the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva on March 25. According to ROK officials, the minister's speech draft is not yet finalized, but it will include his appeal to the international community to pay more attention to the exchange of separated families between the two Koreas and the settlement of problems related to DPRK refugees wandering the PRC in search of food.

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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