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I. United States

1. DPRK Nuclear Freeze

The Washington Times (Stewart Stogel and Ben Barber, "PARTS MISSING IN N. KOREA REACTOR," 03/24/99) reported that a spokesman for the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said Tuesday that when IAEA officials first visited the DPRK's nuclear reactor at Yongbyon, they discovered that critical parts needed to control the atomic reaction in the unit's graphite gas core were missing. The spokesman said, "Equipment that we anticipated that we would find at the reactor under construction has been unaccounted for ever since we could visit that reactor" at the end of 1994. He added, "You would expect in a reactor close to completion that fuel had been made and the

reactor would be in a state of readiness. But this was not found when we were first allowed to visit it." The IAEA has asked the DPRK at 12 meetings--the latest March 9-12 in Pyongyang--to explain the missing parts. The IAEA spokesman said that the DPRK at first insisted it never built the parts due to manufacturing slowdowns and a belief that it would soon reach an accord with the US to abandon its nuclear program. In a subsequent meeting, the DPRK said that "it was checking into the missing parts." Peter Brookes, a senior foreign policy adviser to the US House International Relations Committee, said that the committee was not aware of any missing equipment from the Yongbyon reactor. Brookes stated, "We have not been briefed on anything related to this by the administration. If it is true, it is quite alarming to think that the North Koreans may have intended to use this equipment elsewhere to continue their nuclear program." Officials with the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and the House International Relations Committee similarly said they had not been notified of the missing parts. Robert Gallucci, the former assistant secretary of state who negotiated the 1994 Agreed Framework, also said he was not informed about the missing equipment. Gallucci, currently dean of Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, stated, "If anything was found to be missing at Yongbyon, I should have been told about it, regardless of how important it may or may not have been. I don't remember anything about it." However, an anonymous administration nuclear expert, said that he had known about the missing parts. He added, however, "The North Koreans' capability to build these parts again is unimpaired. We're not that concerned because it is not impossible for them to replicate them." [Ed. note: This article was one of the top stories in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for March 24.]

2. Japanese Naval Engagement

Reuters (Elaine Lies, "JAPAN TURNS TO DIPLOMACY TO DEAL WITH ROGUE SHIPS," Tokyo, 03/24/99) reported that Japanese chief government spokesman Hiromu Nonaka said Wednesday that the government suspected but could not confirm that two ships fired upon by the Japanese navy were from the DPRK. Nonaka stated, "We cannot say definitively that they are North Korean vessels or that they have entered North Korean territorial waters." Nonaka said that Japan would ask the DPRK to return the ships if they entered its waters, adding that Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi had instructed the Japanese Foreign Ministry to make this request through diplomatic channels in Beijing and in New York. Officials said that the 30-meter, 100-ton ships resembled fishing vessels, but they were covered with antennae, carried no nets or other fishing gear, and moved at unusually fast speeds. Obuchi said that his decision to mobilize warships to try stop the fleeing vessels was "appropriate." He stated, "I think the actions taken are important as a show of our commitment to defending our safety." It was the first time a Japanese cabinet had approved the use of a provision of the 1954 self-defense law allowing the military to take over patrolling its waters and the pursuit of vessels.

Reuters ("JAPAN ACCEPTS RUSSIAN OFFER ON SHIP PROBE," Tokyo, 03/24/99) reported that Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura said on Wednesday that the government has accepted an offer from Russia to cooperate in its investigation of ships that intruded into Japanese territorial waters. Komura added that Japan would contact the DPRK if it became clear that the unidentified ships that intruded into its waters on Tuesday were from the DPRK. He stated, "We cannot yet ascertain whether the ships were from North Korea." He added that if it became clear that they were, Japan would ask North Korea to send the ships back to Japan. He also said that the Foreign Ministry had already contacted the US, Russia, and the ROK to explain the situation, adding that the ministry was to contact the PRC soon for the same purpose.

The Associated Press ("S. KOREA CHECKING ON WHEREABOUTS OF SUSPECTED SPY SHIPS," Seoul, 03/24/99) reported that the ROK said Wednesday that it was closely monitoring the ship incursion incident. An anonymous presidential official stated, "Given the seriousness of the situation,

we're closely watching the developments." He added, "As far as we know, the mysterious ships violated Japanese territorial waters, so Japan has the right to pursue them." He noted that Japanese ships fired only warning shots, indicating that they had exercised restraint in pursuing the intruders. ROK military officials said they had no information on the ships.

3. Effects of Japanese Naval Engagement

Reuters (Elaine Lies, "POWERS RALLY AROUND JAPAN AFTER SHIP INCIDENT," Tokyo, 03/24/99) reported that the US Embassy in Tokyo in a statement expressed "serious" concern over the incursion of two unidentified ships into Japanese waters. However, an unnamed analyst told Japanese television that the government's response to the incident was exaggerated. The analyst stated, "It is not completely unheard of to spot North Korean ships in that same general area. Why did they choose this kind of response this time?" An unnamed Western diplomat in Seoul stated, "I don't think this is a fatal blow to engagement. For one thing, nothing has been found, nobody's dead and those things count."

Reuters (Teruaki Ueno, "SHIP INCURSION A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY FOR JAPAN GOVT," Tokyo, 03/24/99) reported that analysts said that the incursion of two unidentified ships in Japanese waters strengthens Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi's bid to change the rules governing Japan's military. Defense analyst Yoshitomo Aoki stated, "This incident provided the government with a good chance to say that areas surrounding Japan are not necessarily peaceful. It will certainly work favorably for Prime Minister Obuchi, who is trying to pass the guidelines legislation before a summit with [US] President [Bill] Clinton in May." Hideshi Takesada, head of the National Institute for Defense Studies, said Japan skillfully handled the boat incident and averted military conflict. Takesada stated, "Japan could have easily blocked and seized the ships, but it didn't. If Japan had resorted to forceful means, the two sides could have exchanged fire and some people on both sides could have died." He added, "If they were plunged into a gun battle, the KEDO [Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization] project, which is a key part of the US engagement policy on North Korea, could have collapsed." He argued, "I believe the United States is now relieved." He added that a military confrontation between Japan and the DPRK would make it difficult for Japan to keep its pledge to support the ROK's policy of engagement. He concluded, "In the eyes of the United States, South Korea and China, Japan scored a diplomatic point."

4. ROK Policy toward DPRK

Reuters ("S.KOREA CALLS FOR STRONG DEFENSE AGAINST NORTH," Seoul, 03/24/99) and the Associated Press ("S KOREA WON'T ALTER N KOREA POLICY DESPITE JAPAN INCIDENT," Seoul, 03/24/99) reported that ROK President Kim Dae-jung on Wednesday called for strong defense against the DPRK. Kim stated, "Security is the most fundamental premise in managing state affairs. Without security, there cannot be a sunshine policy." He added, "North Korea has two faces. We need to send warning signals ... but at the same time we need to encourage them towards reform and openness by offering them economic cooperation and fair treatment." Kim also said that his sunshine policy had gained support abroad. He added, "I would not beg a dialogue but will accept a dialogue at any level." ROK Unification Minister Kang In-duk said that his ministry has been preparing for high-level discussions with the DPRK based on the possibility that the talks could take place as early as this year.

5. Japanese Military Purchases

The Washington Times (James Morrison, "CHOPPERS FOR JAPAN," 03/24/99, 14) reported that US Ambassador to Japan Thomas Foley and Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura on Tuesday signed documents to allow Japan's military to acquire 10 US military helicopters. The deal involves four UN-60J helicopters, five UH-60JA choppers, and one SH-60JMOD model. [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for March 24.]

6. Taiwanese Radar Installation

Agence France-Presse ("TAIWAN CONFIRMS RADAR PLAN," 03/24/99) reported that Taiwanese Air Force Major-General Wang Chih-ke on Tuesday confirmed reports that the Taiwanese military would install US-built long-range radar systems to improve its air defense capability. Wang stated, "As far as I know, buying early-warning radar is a policy of the Defense Ministry. The whole world would know we bought long-range radar once we did. So why not make public the plans?" He added that the budget had been set for the acquisition of the equipment. The Liberty Times newspaper reported last week that the radar systems would cost about NT$26 billion, and that the systems could be operational within six years. It added, "With the long-range radar systems, Taiwan would get more time to deal with China's growing missile threats." Taiwan Defense Ministry spokesman Kung Fan-ding stated, "Armed with advanced weaponry, mainland China's air and naval forces would pose grave threats to Taiwan and the offshore islands sometime around 2005." He said that the PRC had already deployed more than 100 M-class missiles to face Taiwan. He added, "There are also several mobile missile bases in Fujian province that could be put into battle in three to four hours if ordered." [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for March 24.]

7. Taiwanese Missile Defense

The New York Times (Seth Faison, "FORGET TAIWAN MISSILE SHIELD, CHINA WARNS," Shanghai, 03/24/99) reported that Wang Daohan, the PRC's chief negotiator on Taiwan, on Tuesday strongly warned that inclusion of Taiwan in a theater missile defense (TMD) system would provoke an arms race. Wang stated, "That will completely disrupt the current world situation, and instead a new Cold War will appear." He added that the PRC would regard such a move as the establishment of a military alliance between the US and Taiwan, which would represent an unacceptable violation of China's internal affairs. Wang also dismissed concerns over the PRC's missile capabilities, saying, "Chinese people have been very poor for many years. Now we are awakening. But we will never have the goal of invading another country. Our goal is to pursue peace." Wang said he was still planning to proceed with his first visit to Taiwan in September or October. He added that the PRC wants to build a "constructive strategic partnership" with the US. He said, "Note the word 'constructive.' That means that it is progressing, moving toward closer, more cooperative relations." He added, if a theater missile defense system is deployed in Taiwan, "then I ask you: Are our relations constructive or destructive?" He warned, "When we look at today's Taiwan, which has already purchased advanced weapons systems from the United States, we think that it already constitutes an arms race on Taiwan. There should be no such arms race on the island." He argued, "On one hand, the United States has repeatedly advocated making efforts for security in the Pacific. But on the other hand it is advocating an arms race." [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for March 24.]

8. PRC-Taiwan Diplomatic Rivalry

Reuters ("TAIWAN CAUTIONS VATICAN ON CHINA'S 'HYPOCRISY'," Taipei, 03/23/99) reported

that Taiwan Foreign Ministry Spokesman Roy Wu on Tuesday urged the Holy See to reject the PRC's overtures on diplomatic relations. Wu stated, "We fear the Vatican's wishful expectations will not benefit religious freedom in mainland China in any way. There is no sign that the Chinese communists will loosen religious freedom. All countries, including the Vatican, should recognize this fact and not be fooled by the Chinese communists' hypocrisy." Some Taiwanese officials privately acknowledged that a Vatican shift of ties to the PRC would have only limited impact on Taiwan's international diplomacy, but said the number of states recognizing Taiwan still had symbolic significance.

9. Spratly Islands Dispute

The Associated Press ("CHINA REFUSES TO DISMANTLE STRUCTURES IN SPRATLY ISLANDS," Manila, 03/24/99) reported that Philippines' National Security Adviser Alexander Aguirre said Tuesday that the PRC has refused a request from the Philippines that it dismantle buildings on Mischief Reef in the South China Sea's Spratly Islands. Aguirre added, however, that his government is still optimistic that progress can be made in two days of talks on the dispute that were to end later Tuesday. He said that the two sides also discussed the PRC's previous offer to eventually allow joint use of the structures. Philippine officials said that the PRC has said that it is still too early for the Philippines to use the facilities because construction has not been completed. The head of the PRC delegation, Assistant Foreign Minister Wang Yi, on Monday repeated denials that the structures were intended for military use.

II. Republic of Korea

1. Japanese Naval Engagement

Chosun Ilbo ("JAPAN TO DEMAND RETURN OF NK SHIPS," Seoul, 03/24/99) reported that Japanese foreign minister Masahiko Komura announced Wednesday that if it is proven that two vessels which violated its territorial waters were from the DPRK, Japan would demand that the DPRK hand them over to its authorities, through either the DPRK's embassy in Beijing or its UN representative office. The Japanese Self Defense Force Command said that it ordered its units to halt pursuit of the two vessels at 7:55am Wednesday, when an E2C command and control aircraft detected DPRK aircraft flying towards the area. It continued that it took this action to prevent possible escalation. The two boats, disguised as fishing vessels, but carrying no nets and bristling with antennae, were detected off the Nodo peninsula on March 23 at 9:25am and 12:25am, respectively, and naval ships were dispatched to the area. Warning shots were fired from heavy machine guns at the boats, which fled at around 50 km/h towards the DPRK.

JoongAng Ilbo ("NORTH KOREAN VESSELS ESCAPED," Seoul, 03/24/99) reported that two alleged DPRK vessels escaped from Japanese marine territory on March 24. Japanese government vessels fired warning shots at two suspected DPRK vessels. Nine patrol boats began the chase and were soon joined by several aircraft. It is the very first time that the Japanese Self-Defense Army has taken an actual shot since the Second World War. Japan alerted "guard action" at Nodo Peninsula of Ishikawa Prefecture when it discovered the unidentified ships. Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi held a cabinet meeting for the incident and ordered necessary action to the army. The Japanese navy followed the ships, firing warning shots as they pursued. The speed at which the vessels escaped suggests that they were highly modified and unlikely to be fishing vessels. The ships eventually escaped to the DPRK boundary early on the morning of March 24. The incident may have a negative impact on the tenuous relationship between the two nations and attempts to improve

diplomatic ties.

Korea Herald ("SEOUL WARY OF JAPAN'S FIRST CANNON SHOT IN 45 YEARS," Seoul, 03/25/99) reported that the ROK government on Tuesday expressed concerns about the reported firing by Japanese troops of warning shots at two unidentified vessels which invaded its territorial waters. Officials said they were paying close attention to the incident caused by the mystery ships, noting that it was the first time for Japan to have fired "real" cannon shots in 45 years. Since the end of World War II, Japan's law has put a strict limit on the use of weapons by its troops. The ROK fell short of issuing an official statement on the case and refrained from commenting, but officials said they were carefully analyzing the action. "We are closely reviewing whether it can be 'legitimate' or not," a Foreign Affairs and Trade Ministry official said on condition of anonymity. According to the Japanese self-defense law, Japan is authorized to use weapons when necessary to protect lives, property and security, he said, adding that Japan is currently entitled to fire shots directly at anything invading its territory. "By most appearances, Japan seemed to refrain from directly attacking the fleeing vessels," the official said, referring to Japan's warning shots, which he said were defensive.

2. DPRK Military

Chosun Ilbo ("STATISTICS ON NK REVEALED," Seoul, 03/24/99) reported that the ROK Ministry of National Defense (MND), at a national administration meeting chaired by President Kim Dae-jung on Wednesday, revealed various statistics concerning the DPRK's ability to wage and sustain war from a logistics and economic viewpoint. According to the MND's report, concentration on conventional military forces has fallen off since 1990 in the fields of tanks, aircraft, and warships. Up to 1998 only 190 tanks, 85 aircraft and 130 warships have been added to the DPRK's inventory over the past eight years. Field exercises, including fighter training and movements of mechanized units, have decreased as well, reflecting the country's growing economic crisis. An informed source said, "North Korean military exercises have decreased by between 20 percent to 30 percent." However, spending on guerrilla training and the purchase of infiltration equipment, which has significantly lower costs than large conventional military forces have been increased. The number of submarines, including semi-submersible vehicles, has been increased five fold since 1990; seaplanes by 4.5 times and AN-2 aircraft for low level infiltration, 1.2 times. The DPRK is also focusing upon the development of weapons of mass destruction such as biochemical weapons and long-range missiles.

3. Defection of DPRK Diplomat

Chosun Ilbo ("THAILAND SHOWS NK THE DOOR," Seoul, 03/24/99) said that the leadership of Thailand has shown an impressive style of diplomacy and firmness since March 9, when an unsuccessful attempt to kidnap a DPRK diplomat, by agents from his own country, was uncovered. The ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs immediately released a statement saying that the diplomat, Hong Sun-kyong, and his family were seeking asylum and would not be returned to the DPRK. Also the government demanded an official apology and the unconditional release of Hong's son, who was being held by DPRK diplomats in their Bangkok embassy, as the DPRK had infringed on Thailand's sovereignty and breached its domestic and international laws. In addition it threatened expulsions and legal action. This pressure was maintained, as the government stuck to its principles, until six diplomats were expelled and Hong's son was released. This was the first diplomatic expulsion from Thailand since 1979, when Russian diplomats were declared persona non grata. Analysts said that Thailand's diplomatic strength stems from the country's independent history; it is the only country in Asia never to have been invaded or dominated by external forces.

4. ROK Policy on DPRK

Korea Times ("SEOUL TO PURSUE INTER-KOREAN TALKS THIS YEAR," Seoul, 03/24/99) reported that ROK Unification Minister Kang In-duk on Tuesday said that his ministry will strive to create a favorable environment for the reopening of inter-Korean dialogue in the second half of this year. Kang made the remarks in an annual policy report to President Kim Dae- jung. "By pushing ahead with economic assistance to North Korea and stimulating inter-Korean economic cooperation, we will try to create an atmosphere to improve inter-Korean relations and open dialogue in the latter half of this year," Kang said. Officials here said they are convinced that prospects for the resumption of inter-Korean dialogue are bright because the DPRK also proposed last month that the two Koreas open "political dialogue" in the last half of this year. Minister Kang compiled his report on the basis of a three-stage plan consisting of short-, mid- and long-term policy tasks for this year. Included in the short-term policy tasks are continuous assistance to the DPRK and preparations for the full-fledged construction of two light-water reactors in the DPRK. The mid-term tasks include the activation of inter-Korean economic cooperation and the reunion of separated families. The long-term tasks include the creation of an atmosphere for dialogue between ROK and DPRK authorities.

5. ROK-DPRK Relations

Korea Herald ("KIM URGES MINISTRY TO PUSH FOR LETTER EXCHANGES BETWEEN SEPARATED FAMILIES," Seoul, 03/25/99) reported that ROK President Kim Dae-jung urged the Unification Ministry on Tuesday to push for letter exchanges between separated families in the ROK and the DPRK. Kim also reiterated his position that the ROK government is ready to hold negotiations with the DPRK to swap pardoned communist spies in the ROK with ROK captives in the DPRK. During a visit to the ministry, Kim said that William Perry, the US policy coordinator on the DPRK, may visit the DPRK, which he said may cause a "considerable change" in inter-Korean relations. There have been reports that Perry, who plans to draw up a new DPRK policy in May, will visit Pyongyang, but Kim's comments mark the first time the President has publicly mentioned the possibility. Kim said that allowing inter-Korean correspondence should be the first step in achieving the ROK government-proposed reunions of separated families. "We did not attach any conditions when we announced fertilizer aid (to the DPRK recently), but I hope that we would be able to, at the least, let South Koreans exchange correspondence with their families in the North," Kim 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
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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