

# NAPSNet Daily Report 25 December, 1998

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## **I. United States**

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### **1. Sinking of DPRK Submarine**

The Associated Press ("S.KOREA CLAIMS SINKING OF SUBMARINE," Seoul, 12/17/98), the Washington Post (Kevin Sullivan, "SOUTH KOREA DETECTS, SINKS NORTH'S SPY SUB," Tokyo, 12/18/98, A24), the New York Times (Nicholas D. Kristof, "NORTH KOREAN VESSEL IS CHASED AND SUNK OFF COAST OF SOUTH," Tokyo, 12/18/98) and the Los Angeles Times (Valerie Reitman, "S. KOREA REPORTS SINKING SUB FROM NORTH," Tokyo, 12/18/98) reported that the ROK Defense Ministry said that navy ships fought a gunbattle with a suspected DPRK submarine Friday and sunk it off the ROK's southern coast. The ministry said that the 10-ton craft was first spotted shortly before midnight Thursday as it approached the shore near Yosu. It added that the submarine then fled southeast, leading ROK navy ships and air force planes on a chase for 5 1/2 hours. The ministry said that the submarine was eventually trapped 60 miles off the coast, at which point it opened fire at the pursuing ROK ships. In a brief exchange of fire, the ROK then sank the submarine.

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The body of one of the vessel's crewmen was recovered in a wet suit. ROK military expert Jee Man-won stated, "The fact that North Korea continues to gather intelligence at the east, west and south coast means that it is not convinced that South Korea's sunshine policy is not a disguised plot, so they continue preparing for the worst." [Ed. note: The New York Times article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news summary for December 18.]

Reuters ("JAPAN SAYS NAVY MONITORING AFTER KOREA SHOOTOUT," Tokyo, 12/17/98) reported that Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura said that Japan's navy is monitoring the situation after a shoot-out early on Friday between a DPRK submarine and the ROK military. However, a Japanese Defense Agency spokesman stated, "There has been no talk of taking any special measures." Separately, top government spokesman Hiromu Nonaka said that Japan was carefully monitoring the situation but was not conducting any independent checks into the matter or putting its military on alert.

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## **2. ROK-DPRK Economic Cooperation**

The Wall Street Journal (Hae Won Choi, "SOUTH KOREAN FIRMS' ADS FIX ON UNIFICATION THEME," 12/18/98) reported that many ROK companies are using the opening of tours to the DPRK's Mt. Kumgang as a theme in advertising their products. Oh Hye-jin, a spokeswoman at Nong Shim Noodle Company, which ran an ad featuring Mt. Kumgang, said that an ad theme like this can boost sales despite the ROK's recession. Oh stated, "The company wanted an ad carrying a message instead of just a pretty model or a celebrity to market the product. The reunification theme is something that South Koreans can relate to."

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## **3. Taiwanese Toxic Waste Exports**

Reuters ("CAMBODIA TO RETURN DUMPED TOXIC WASTE TO TAIWAN," Phnom Penh, 12/17/98) reported that Cambodian Environment Minister Mok Mareth said on Friday that Cambodia plans to send back nearly 3,000 tons of suspected toxic waste imported from Taiwan. Mok Mareth stated, "Our position is clear -- we must send it back as soon as possible. We cannot keep it any longer in Cambodia, otherwise it will kill all Cambodian people." He added, "Whoever transported this to Cambodia, must export it back. We have no money for transportation and we are scared to get closer to the site."

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## **4. Japanese Germ Warfare Experiments in WWII**

The Associated Press ("CHINA FINDS WWII EXPERIMENT VICTIMS," Shanghai, 12/18/98) reported that the PRC's People's Daily newspaper said Friday that Chinese construction workers have unearthed the remains of 30 people killed in Japanese germ warfare experiments during World War II. Workers found the remains in a former basement laboratory as they prepared to erect an office building in the central city of Nanjing. Twenty-nine severed heads and one dismembered body were excavated from the site. The paper said that the Nanjing laboratory was used by Unit 1644 of the Japanese army, which specialized in producing the bacteria that cause cholera, typhoid, and plague. It added that a three-month autopsy on the remains, which were uncovered in August, confirmed they were victims of the unit's bacteria experiments. The report came less than a week after annual memorial services to mark Japan's capture of Nanjing on December 13, 1937.

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## **5. Reactions to US Bombing of Iraq**

The Wall Street Journal (Matt Forney, "CHINA CONDEMNS U.S. ATTACKS, DEMANDS RAIDS ON IRAQ CEASE," 12/18/98) reported that PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman Sun Yuxi on Thursday condemned US missile raids on Iraq. Sun stated, "We are deeply shocked. We call on the United States to immediately halt all military actions against Iraq." Sun said, however, that the PRC has not filed a demarche with the US Embassy in Beijing. India Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said in a speech to parliament, "It is particularly regrettable that this unilateral step has been taken at the very time when the UN Security Council is in session to discuss developments' in Iraq." Meanwhile, in Tokyo, Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi said, "We support the action by the US and the UK." Obuchi called on the Iraqi government to "immediately and unconditionally" carry out its agreement with the UN Security Council regarding weapons inspections.

## **II. Republic of Korea**

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### **1. Sinking of DPRK Submarine**

Chosun Ilbo ("DPRK AGENT'S BODY FOUND IN SEA," Seoul, 12/18/98) reported that the Headquarters of the Joint Chiefs of Staff announced Friday that a suspected DPRK semi-submersible vessel was sunk by the navy 100 km south of Keoje island. A spokesman for the Joint Chiefs said the 10-ton high-speed ship was spotted in the seas off the port of Yosu in the southern ROK at 11:15 p.m. Thursday. ROK Navy vessels and helicopters began pursuing the ship after it failed to respond to orders to stop. After a series of engagements, the ship was sunk at 5:55 a.m. The spokesperson stated that one body was recovered from the sinking vessel. A hand grenade was found in the pocket of the diving suit of the corpse. He stated that an extensive search was underway in the south coastal area where agents from the DPRK vessel might have infiltrated. The spokesperson also said that the vessel was likely on its way to pick up DPRK agents. The navy is also searching for the mother vessel that might have carried the semi-submersible in the open seas and is continuing its surveillance of the area. The navy suspects the mother vessel may be near the coast of Shanghai. The spokesperson stated that it is highly unlikely that any DPRK agents survived the attack since no evidence was found of land infiltration. The spokesperson said that more details of the DPRK mission will be revealed after the sunken vessel is salvaged.

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### **2. Repatriation of DPRK Corpse**

JoongAng Ilbo ("RED CROSS TO HAND OVER DPRK BODY," Seoul, 12/18/98) reported that the ROK Red Cross Society suggested a meeting with the DPRK's Red Cross on December 18 to discuss the delivery of a DPRK dead body back to the DPRK. Red Cross President Chung Won-shik called his counterpart in the DPRK, Lee Sung-ho, to propose a meeting for the transfer of the dead 40-year-old DPRK man who was found in the Youngduk area of the ROK. The unidentified dead man was wearing a Kim Il-sung badge and seems to have been dead for more than 40 days.

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### **3. ROK Environmental Policy**

Korea Herald ("PRESIDENT KIM CHOSEN AS POLLUTER OF THE YEAR," Seoul, 12/18/98) reported that a local environmental group on Thursday chose ROK President Kim Dae-jung as the "polluter of the year" for his administration's policy of easing restrictions on development of the nation's greenbelt areas. President Kim was singled out because he ordered the easing of regulations on the greenbelt system, which will only lead to environmental destruction, the Environment and Pollution Research Group said. The government has not yet announced the final plans for the easing of regulations in the greenbelt areas, where development is strictly limited. For the past 27 years, the greenbelt system has been in place to stem the environmental pollution and destruction that results from unchecked development.

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#### **4. ROK Constitutional Changes**

Chosun Ilbo ("PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES," Seoul, 12/18/98) reported that ROK President Kim Dae-jung and Prime Minister Kim Jong-pil gave speeches on the occasion of the one-year anniversary of the government's inauguration. The two leaders expressed differences of opinion on the topic of a constitutional reform that would change the government into a cabinet-responsible system. President Kim said the agreement to reform the constitution was made between himself and the Prime Minister and that the issue should be resolved through further negotiations between the two men. The President's remarks indicate that he is reconsidering the initial agreement. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Kim stated that it was the pledge to change the constitution in order to rebuild ROK politics that pushed the government to a victory in the last presidential election. He continued that the pledge was the moral foundation of the present government and if not kept, the government would have no basis for its existence. The Prime Minister's comments hinted that he would continue to press for the constitutional changes next year.

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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