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I. United States

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1. Inauguration of ROK President

The Associated Press (Paul Shin, "NEW S. KOREA PRESIDENT SWORN IN," Seoul, 02/25/98), Reuters (Yoo Choon-sik, "SOUTH KOREA'S KIM INAUGURATED, ROW ERUPTS," Seoul, 02/25/98), and the Washington Post (Mary Jordan and Kevin Sullivan, "KIM DAE JUNG TAKES HELM AS S. KOREAN PRESIDENT," Seoul, 02/25/98, A19), reported that Kim Dae-jung was inaugurated as president of the ROK on Wednesday. After being sworn in, Kim stated, "Today is a proud day when a democratic transition of power is taking place on this soil for the first time." He promised to consult with the Grand National Party, which holds the majority in the National Assembly, in return for a pledge of cooperation "if only for one year -- this year -- when the nation is standing on the brink of disaster." He added, "Democracy and the market economy are two sides of a coin or two wheels of a

cart. Every nation that has embraced both democracy and a market economy has been successful." Pledging to try to improve relations with the DPRK, Kim proposed that the two Koreas exchange special envoys to discuss rapprochement, and renewed his earlier proposal for a summit with Kim Jong-il. He set forth three principles as the basis for peaceful coexistence: no armed DPRK provocation, no ROK attempt to absorb the DPRK, and expanded business, cultural, and other exchanges. He added, "The Cold War style of South-North relations for over a half-century, during which members of separated families could not confirm whether their own parents and brothers and sisters are alive or dead, let alone carry on dialogue and exchanges, must be liquidated as soon as possible." Domestically, Kim pledged not to seek revenge for his persecution by previous administrations.

The White House Office of the Press Secretary ("MCLARTY LEADING U.S. DELEGATION TO KIM INAUGURAL," USIA Text, Washington, 02/24/98) released the following statement: "Thomas F. (Mack) McLarty, Counselor to the President and Special Envoy for the Americas, is leading a delegation of nine distinguished public and private American citizens to represent the President and the people of the United States at the inauguration of Kim Dae-jung as President of the Republic of Korea on February 25, 1998. While in South Korea the delegation will meet with newly elected President Kim Dae-jung and tour the Demilitarized Zone."

The New York Times carried an editorial ("DAY OF HOPE IN SOUTH KOREA," 02/25/98) which said that the inauguration of Kim Dae-jung as president of the ROK marks an advance for ROK democracy and a new chance for reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula. The article added, "It also starts a widely watched test of whether economic openness and political accountability can cure East Asia's financial ills." Arguing that the ROK "is a vastly different country today than it was when Kim Dae Jung began his political career, the article credited him with being a catalyst for many of those changes. It concluded, "But his greatest chance to transform Korea begins today. "

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2. ROK-DPRK Relations

The New York Times (Nicholas D. Kristof, "SOUTH KOREA'S NEW PRESIDENT APPEALS TO NORTH TO END DECADES OF DIVISION," Seoul 02/25/98) reported that ROK President Kim Dae-jung emphasized improvement of relations with the DPRK in his inauguration speech. Kim suggested that he might not object if the DPRK pushed to improve ties with the US and Japan. [Selig S. Harrison](#), director of a project on Korea for the Twentieth Century Fund Foundation in Washington, stated, "That is the most important signal that Kim Dae-jung could send to North Korea at this time. Noting that the DPRK continually emphasizes its desire to improve relations with the US, Harrison argued that, if the ROK were to let that happen, there could be significant progress on the Korean peninsula. Harrison stated, "If Kim Dae-jung continues to strike this note, that's the most important stimulus he can give to the improvement of North-South relations." However, former ROK prime minister Lee Hong-koo argued, "In North-South relations, 90 percent depends on North Korea. It doesn't depend so much on who is in Blue House."

The San Jose Mercury News (Michael Zielenziger, "SOUTH KOREA'S NEW PRESIDENT CALLS FOR RECONCILIATION WITH NORTH KOREA," Seoul, 02/24/98) reported that foreign observers are hopeful that new ROK President Kim Dae-jung can bring about reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula. US Ambassador to Italy Thomas Foglietta, stated, "He can do for this region what Mandela did for Africa, or what Gandhi did in India. Who knows? He could help inspire China to give its people freedom and democracy."

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3. ROK Political Prisoners

The Associated Press (Pauline Jelinek, "S KOREA PRISONERS RELEASE HOPED FOR," Seoul, 02/25/98) reported that human rights groups are hopeful that newly inaugurated ROK President Kim Dae-jung may take action to free longtime ROK political prisoners. Suzie Kim of Minkahyup, an organization of prisoners' relatives, stated, "we know that if we don't really push him, he might forget that there are people like that." Suh Joon-shik, an activist who spent a decade in jail in the late 1970s and is now on trial for showing an allegedly procommunist film, said, "Sometimes when people get power, they change their mind. We hope DJ's not one of them." Rory Mungoven of the London-based Amnesty International stated, "This is such a blight on Korea's international reputation, these political prisoners. It puts Korea in the same league as China, Indonesia and Burma." He added that Kim Dae-jung "needs to be bold ... to push ahead with reforms ... to generate momentum in his first months in office. Otherwise, he'll be blocked by powerful interests in the bureaucracy and the establishment -- and the opportunity will be lost."

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4. ROK Financial Crisis

The Wall Street Journal (Michael Schuman and Namju Cho, "APPEALING TO FOREIGN INVESTORS IS JUST THE BEGINNING FOR KIM," Seoul, 02/25/98) reported that, in his inauguration speech, ROK President Kim Dae-jung said that stabilizing prices would be key to restoring the ROK economy, and that the government will not influence business competition. He also said he would strive to attract foreign investment while fostering exports. Daryl Plunk, a Korea expert at the Heritage Foundation in Washington, predicted, "There will be a particular focus on foreign investor confidence" in the new administration. Meanwhile You Jong-keun, a key economic aide to President Kim, said Tuesday, "No longer will there be any discrimination against foreign products, companies and capital. Korea now recognizes that capital has no nationality, and welcomes foreign investors with open arms."

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5. Confirmation of ROK Prime Minister

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("S. KOREAN PRESIDENT IN LEGISLATIVE SPAT OVER PRIME MINISTER," Seoul, 02/25/98) reported that the majority Grand National Party boycotted a National Assembly session called to ratify the nomination of Kim Jong-pil, head of the minority United Liberal Democrats, as prime minister. ROK President Kim Dae-jung said that he has no intention of changing his choice and that he will not form his Cabinet until the Assembly confirms Kim Jong-pil. By law, a prime minister must recommend Cabinet ministers before the president appoints them. Kim's aides said that he might appoint deputy ministers to run the government until the confirmation is complete. However, Maeng Hyung-kyu, a spokesman of the Grand National Party, stated, "The president must change his mind. We will never accept Kim Jong-pil because he is a symbol of old-time politics."

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6. DPRK Famine

The Associated Press (Joe McDonald, "GROUP: N. KOREA RUNNING OUT OF FOOD," Beijing, 02/25/98) reported that Kathi Zellweger, the Hong Kong director of the charity Caritas, who returned Tuesday from a trip to the DPRK, said that the DPRK expects to run through its domestic

food stocks by April, leaving it reliant on foreign aid. She added that the transportation system needed to deliver relief is on the verge of collapse for lack of fuel and spare parts. Zellweger stated that, while a mild winter has made it easier for people in the DPRK to stay warm, the lack of snow will mean water shortages later. She added, "We did not see severe or widespread malnutrition in the general population but there are still malnourished children in institutions." Zellweger concluded, "We can't go on like this providing large quantities of food aid. We need to address the issue at another level, dealing with the problem in a development-oriented way."

Reuters ("NORTH KOREAN REFUGEES SAY FAMILIES DEVASTATED BY FAMINE," Washington, 02/24/98) reported that the Korean American Sharing Movement said in a statement Tuesday that DPRK refugees interviewed in the PRC stated that about 29 percent of their relatives, acquaintances, and neighbors have died in the last two years of famine. The estimate is based on a survey of 472 DPRK refugees questioned by the ROK Korean Buddhist Sharing Movement (KBSM) between October 1997 and January 1998 in PRC border villages. KBSM will present detailed findings at a news conference at the US Congress on Wednesday. The statement said, "The North Korean famine continues to claim a large number of victims, particularly in the tightly controlled north province of Jagang, bordered with the mountainous Chinese side, and in the city of Hamhung."

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7. ROK-Taiwan Relations

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("TAIWANESE SR OFFICIAL HOPEFUL OF IMPROVED S. KOREA RELATIONS," Seoul, 02/25/98) reported that John Chang, secretary-general of Taiwan's ruling Nationalist Party, said Wednesday that he is hopeful that the new ROK government will improve relations with Taiwan. Chang, who attended President Kim Dae-jung's inauguration ceremony on Wednesday along with seven other Taiwanese legislators, stated, "I saw some good signals. My coming here to attend the presidential inauguration ceremony is one of the good signals." The Taiwanese delegation also met with lawmaker Sohn Sae-il, a top aide to the Kim Dae-jung who had visited Taipei last week to meet with President Lee Teng-hui and other Taiwanese officials. Chang said that during his meeting with Sohn, "I suggested that bilateral relations should be further enhanced based on mutual interest and received a positive response." He added, however, "We have to move forward gradually, step by step."

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8. PRC-Taiwan Relations

The New York Times (Edward A. Gargan, "CHINA SEEKS TO REOPEN TALKS WITH TAIWAN ON FUTURE OF ISLAND," Hong Kong, 02/25/98) reported that many Taiwan officials and opinion-makers believed that the US has exerted pressure on the Taiwan government to accept the latest proposal by the PRC to restart negotiations. Huang Chao-sung, president of Taiwan's largest newspaper, The China Times, stated, "I agree that there is pressure from Washington. We think it's because of Clinton's visit to China." An unnamed senior Taiwanese official said that a US delegation led by former defense secretary William J. Perry which visited Taiwan last month told the Taiwan government that the PRC is ready to hold talks. He added, "I do think we are being pressured. There's no doubt about it." However, Taiwan Foreign Minister Jason Hu stated, "I don't think the United States would want to make us feel pushed or hastened or pressurized into any talks. They would express an earnest desire to see the earliest possible resumption of dialogue." US diplomats at the American Institute in Taiwan likewise argued that the US is not attempting to push Taiwan into negotiations, although they said that resuming discussions would ease tensions.

II. Republic of Korea

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1. DPRK Criticizes ROK National Security Agency

Kyodo press of Japan on February 24 quoted the DPRK Korea Central News Agency as saying that Kim Bong-shik, DPRK vice-president and chairman of the Socialist Democratic party central committee, urged the abolition of the ROK's Agency for National Security Planning (NSP) and National Security Law. Earlier this month, Yang Hyong-sub, chairman of the Supreme People's Assembly, also stated similar demands to the ROK. (Kyonghyan Shinmun, "DPRK URGES FOR ABOLITION OF ROK NATIONAL SECURITY INSTITUTIONS," 02/25/98)

The DPRK, through an article in its monthly Chonlima, criticized the ROK's NSP for hindering the normalization of inter-Korean relations and pledged that it will not hold intercourse in any way with the organization in the future. In the October, 1997 issue of the DPRK journal, the NSP was criticized for having carried out political maneuvers to hinder inter-Korean relations. (Joongang Ilbo, "DPRK PLEDGES NO MORE DEALINGS WITH NSP," 02/25/98)

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2. UN Command Disengagement

Thailand and the Philippines have notified their decision to pull out their delegations under the United Nations Command (UNC) on the Korean Peninsula, an official at the ROK Defense Ministry said on February 23. The official stated, "They have expressed their intentions to withdraw their UNC delegations, citing the economic difficulties facing them. And we, along with the UNC hierarchy, are trying to persuade them not to." The two countries are the only members besides the US of the 16-nation UN-led coalition that fought on the side of ROK during the Korean War that still maintain their UN delegation in the ROK. (Korea Times, "THAILAND, PHILIPPINES MOVING TO PULL OUT OF UN COMMAND IN KOREA," 02/25/98)

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3. Test Flights Over DPRK

US and Asian air carriers, led by Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific, are starting their test of a DPRK air corridor that could save airlines time and money. Officials said on February 23 that the first flight, a Cathay Pacific cargo jet, would leave Anchorage, Alaska, on February 27 for Hong Kong. It is to be followed in subsequent days by US carriers Delta and United, Singapore Air, and the ROK's Korean Air. Tony Laven, director of infrastructure for the Singapore regional office of the International Air Transport Association, said that the flights will not fly over DPRK land, but off the eastern coast of the DPRK. If all goes well, the route could be open to regular commercial traffic in April, Laven said. (Korea Times, "US, ASIA AIR CARRIERS TO TEST DPRK AIR SPACE," 02/25/98)

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.

Produced by [the Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development](#).

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