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I. United States

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1. ROK-DPRK Red Cross Talks

The Associated Press (Elaine Kurtenbach, "NORTH, S. KOREA RESUME FOOD TALKS," Beijing, 03/25/98), Reuters (Scott Hillis, "NORTH, SOUTH KOREA SEEK TO END FOOD AID IMPASSE," Beijing, 03/24/98), and United Press International ("KOREAN RED CROSS TALKS OPEN IN BEIJING," Beijing, 03/25/98) reported that Red Cross delegates from the ROK and the DPRK resumed talks on food aid in Beijing on Wednesday. The ROK Red Cross renewed an offer to send 50,000 tons of food aid to the DPRK, and also raised a proposal on reuniting separated families. An ROK official said that no progress had been made during the 90-minute meeting Wednesday morning, and that DPRK Red Cross delegates needed to consult with their office in Pyongyang before formal negotiations could resume Thursday or Friday. Johan Schaar of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) said that ROK Red Cross negotiators were asking for guarantees about food distribution but would not insist that ROK monitors accompany the deliveries to the DPRK. He added, "I don't think the time is ripe yet for South Korean monitors." Sten Swedlund, the head of the IFRC mission in Pyongyang, stated, "At this specific period, it is of course extremely important that they manage to reach an agreement because there is

a big need for food assistance in North Korea. The regular food supplies are coming to an end so we are facing a very difficult summer period without any food in the regular food supply pipeline." Patrick Howard, head of the IFRC in Seoul, stated, "There definitely is a greater will [on the ROK's part] to assist with humanitarian aid. The food is there. The money is there." He added that the question of monitoring "is the only issue dividing them." He said that the international response to the latest World Food Program request for food aid for the DPRK has been lukewarm, mainly because of concerns over how the food may be distributed. He said European governments were hoping an international team would be able to visit the DPRK to assess the situation.

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2. PRC-Taiwan Talks Proposal

Reuters (Alice Hung, "DEADLOCK IN CHINA TALKS FRUSTRATES TAIWAN POLICYMAKER," Taipei, 03/25/98) reported that Chang King-yuh, chairman of the Taiwan cabinet's Mainland Affairs Council, said Wednesday that relations with the PRC would not improve until the two sides resumed dialogue. He called on the PRC to return swiftly to talks and that Taiwan was willing to have full-blown political negotiations "in due time." Chang stated, "When two civilized societies are dealing with matters there is no alternative to talks and negotiations. Otherwise we are going to use force, which is not civilized at all." He added, "We have already laid out the plan but we have not received a definitive reply from their side." Chang said that while he sometimes felt frustrated by the impasse, "We need time. We need patience. We need consistent policies to try to reduce or remove those distrusts and misunderstandings." He insisted that semi-official talks on easier technical issues must come first, arguing, "We just believe you should start from the original positions, then move gradually toward other issues rather than completely abandoning the original issues and starting new things all of a sudden." He stated that the Taiwan government has not "deviated from one China but we believe today, politically speaking, China is not a united state. If they insist on one China being the PRC, then there's no way we can talk because they deny the very existence of us." Chang said that new PRC premier Zhu Rongji faced great challenges in reforming the PRC economy and that Taiwan was willing to help if avenues can be found.

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3. Russian Nuclear Espionage

Reuters ("RUSSIAN GETS JAIL FOR SPYING," Moscow, 03/23/98) reported that Russia's Itar-Tass news agency said that the Russian Strategic Nuclear Forces' military court on Monday sentenced former major Igor Dudnik to 12 years in jail for spying. Dudnik was convicted of attempting to sell top secret data to the US on the nuclear missile command, its structure, warfare plans, and training. Dudnik had wanted US$500,000 for his information. Tass quoted Russian nuclear experts as saying, "Had this information reached the U.S., Russia would have lost the ability to effectively use the combat force of one of its biggest nuclear groups. It would have needed enormous expenditure to restructure the nuclear forces command." The report said that Dudnik tried to establish contact with US intelligence through school friends, but it was not clear whether Dudnik himself had ever had any contact with the US.

II. Republic of Korea

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1. Korean Unification Costs

ROK citizens will have to bear an additional tax burden, should they come to support the DPRK people with basic needs, according to a report by the Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs researcher Roh Yong-hyan. Roh's report estimates a cost of 8.9 trillion won to meet the DPRK's basic food, clothing, and energy requirements. Accordingly, the tax burden for ROK citizens would amount to an additional 11 percent, based on 1996 tax. (Joongang Ilbo, "UNIFICATION WILL ADD TAX BURDEN TO ROK CITIZENS," 03/25/98)

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2. ROK-Japan Ministerial Talks

The ROK does not expect early resumption of the annual meeting of foreign and economy-related ministers with Japan, an official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Trade said on March 24. The official said that Japanese Foreign Minister Keizo Obuchi had proposed an idea of the resumption of annual talks, yet no concrete measures have been discussed. In addition, the official denied the media report of a ROK- Japan foreign ministers' meeting to be held in May. (Korea Times, "RESUMPTION OF CABINET MEETING WITH JAPAN NOT LIKELY SOON," 03/25/98)

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3. New ROK Ambassadors Appointed

Former ROK Prime Minister Lee Hong-koo is to become the new ROK ambassador to the US, an ROK government source said on March 24. Kim Suk-kyu, former chancellor of the Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security (IFANS), will be appointed ambassador to Japan, he said. The government also designated Kwon Byong-hyon, an IFANS research commissioner, as ambassador to the PRC, and Lee In- ho, the ambassador to Finland, as ambassador to Russia. Lee See-young, ambassador to France, was designated as ambassador to the United Nations, the source said. (Korea Herald, "LEE HONG-KOO NAMED AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON," 03/25/98)

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Yonsei University, Seoul, Republic of Korea
The Center for Global Communications, Tokyo, Japan
Fudan University, Shanghai, People's Republic of China

Wade L. Huntley: napsnet@nautilus.org
Berkeley, California, United States

Timothy L. Savage: napsnet@nautilus.org
Berkeley, California, United States

Shin Dong-bom: dongbom_shin@wisenet.co.kr
Seoul, Republic of Korea

Choi Chung-moon: cily@star.elim.co.kr
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