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I. United States

1. US-DPRK Relations

The Associated Press (George Gedda, "U.S., NORTH KOREA HOLD TALKS," Washington, 11/26/97) reported that the US and DPRK held high-level discussions for six hours Wednesday for the first time at the State Department. The delegations were led by US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Charles Kartman and DPRK Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye-gwan. Kim declined comment at the conclusion of the talks. The State Department summation of the meeting called the talks "businesslike" but indicated there were no breakthroughs. It said that the DPRK thanked the US for the food aid provided by the Clinton administration. The subjects discussed included cooperation on the return of the remains of US servicemen from the Korean War, the establishment of liaison offices in the two capitals, missile proliferation, and terrorism. The State Department said that "technical issues" remain to be resolved before the liaison offices can open. It added that no dates were set for a resumption of US-DPRK missile talks. Before the meeting, Larry Greer, a spokesman for the POW-MIA Office of the Department of Defense, said that US officials intended to press the DPRK for permission to interview four US Army veterans who defected to the DPRK in the 1960s to determine

whether they have information about any US nationals from the Korean War era who may be living there.

US State Department Spokesman James Foley ("STATE DEPARTMENT NOON BRIEFING," Washington, USIA Transcript, 11/26/97) said that the US expected to raise a range of bilateral issues at talks with DPRK Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye-Gwan being held in Washington on Wednesday. Foley said that the topics would include discussion of the possibility of the opening of liaison offices in the respective capitals and the question of US servicemen missing in action from the Korean War. He added that the US hopes "that we might be able to move towards possibly setting dates for the next round of missile talks." Regarding DPRK demands for withdrawal of US troops from the ROK, Foley stated, "we never said to the North Koreans that this was not an issue that they could not raise at the appropriate point." He added, "I would not be surprised if the North Koreans put that particular issue on the table, once the plenary talks begin in Geneva." Asked what steps have to be taken to ease the economic embargo on the DPRK, Foley replied, "I don't have an exhaustive list for you there, but North Korea remains on the terrorism list, and they would have to address our concerns in that area. I cite that as just one example."

2. DPRK Famine

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("FAO: NORTH KOREA 1997 MAIZE OUTPUT LOWEST ON RECORD," Rome, 11/26/97) reported that the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the UN and the World Food Program (WFP) said in a joint report that the DPRK's 1997 food production fell for the third consecutive year. An FAO spokesman said that the DPRK needs about 1.95 million tons of food imports for the October-through-December period of 1997 and all of 1998. DPRK officials last week reported a harvest this year of 2.68 million tons of rice and corn, while the FAO estimates that the DPRK needs 4.6 million tons each year. In 1997, maize production was the lowest on record, at an estimated 1.14 million tons, or more than 50 percent lower than what may have been expected under favorable weather conditions, the FAO and WFP also said. The report stated, however, that two years of international help has helped keep chronic malnutrition from spreading. Despite much anecdotal evidence of starvation, the agencies said Wednesday that there was no solid data on the extent of malnutrition.

3. Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction

The Washington Post carried an opinion article by US Secretary of State William S. Cohen ("IN THE AGE OF TERROR WEAPONS," 11/26/97, A19) which said that the "threat of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons is not limited to Iraq -- and the front line could just as easily be Washington or New York as in the Middle East or the Korean peninsula." Saying that "There is ample evidence of the immediacy and extent of the threat," Cohen argued, "The sooner we confront it, the more effective our efforts will be." Cohen said that US Defense Department funding for chemical and biological defense capabilities will be increased by US\$1 billion over the next five years. Cohen concluded, "In a shrinking world of advancing technology and increasingly porous borders, the ability to unleash mass destruction and death is spreading." [Ed. note: NAPSNet is issuing an excerpt from the recently released Defense Department report, "Proliferation: Threat and Response," today as a Special Report.]

4. Asian Financial Crisis

The Los Angeles Times (Evelyn Iritani and Elizabeth Shogren, "LEADERS AT SUMMIT OK PLAN TO BOLSTER ASIAN ECONOMIES," Vancouver, 11/26/97) and the Associated Press (Terence Hunt, "APEC SUMMIT OKS CRISIS PLAN," Vancouver, 11/26/97) reported that the leaders of the 18 nations of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) on Tuesday agreed to support a plan

drafted last week in Manila to provide "backup financing" to the International Monetary Fund's fiscal rescue programs and to set up an early warning system that would help governments in Asia avoid future problems. US President Bill Clinton said that the achievements of the APEC summit were striking, given that the nations involved included those under the most severe financial strain. Following the meeting, Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto warned that Japan cannot act as a "locomotive" for the revival of Asian economies.

5. ROK Elections

Reuters (Jane Lee, "SOUTH KOREAN CAMPAIGN UNDER WAY," Seoul, 11/26/97) reported that six ROK presidential candidates on Wednesday paid a fee of US\$447,000 to register officially for the December 18 election. The campaign is expected to center on television debates, as outdoor campaign rallies have been banned to lower costs and keep candidates from amassing slush funds from businesses. The first live televised debate between the three main presidential candidates will take place on Wednesday evening. Among the other candidates is the first labor presidential candidate, Kwon Young-gil, head of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions.

The Washington Post (Kevin Sullivan, "SOUTH KOREAN VOTERS IGNORE ECONOMIC ILLS," Seoul, 11/26/97, A27) reported that public opinion polls in the ROK released Monday show that ruling party presidential candidate Lee Hoi-chang has virtually eliminated the lead of opposition leader Kim Dae-jung. The polls show Lee's support ranging from 29 to 35 percent, and two polls show him leading Kim. Kim's support ranges from 33 to 37 percent in various polls. The third candidate, former Kyonggi-do governor Rhee In-je, has dropped significantly in the polls and now appears to be a long shot unless conditions change dramatically. One analyst said that when the election seemed far off, voters were more willing to take a second look at Kim, "But when they go in there to vote on that cold winter day, they're going to go for the safer choice." Analysts said that the effects of earlier allegations that Lee's two sons had intentionally evaded mandatory military service appear to be waning. Moon Chung-in, a political scientist at Yonsei University, stated, "If that scandal had broken now, it could be a critical blow."

6. Russian Arms Sales to PRC

Agence France-Presse ("RUSSIA REPORTEDLY SIGNS ARMS DEALS WITH INDIA, CHINA," Moscow, 11/26/97) reported that Russia's ITAR-TASS news agency said Wednesday that Rosvooruzheniye, the monopoly Russian arms exporter, signed a US\$1 billion dollar contract with the PRC. Diplomatic sources said that the sales package involved low-noise submarines and destroyers. Russia is now second in world arms sales, behind the US.

II. Republic of Korea

1. ROK-Japan Fisheries Talk

The ROK and Japan will open three days of working-level fisheries talks in Seoul Wednesday in their latest effort to settle differences over revising a bilateral fishing accord. Preceding the talks, a two-day meeting on Japan's unilaterally declared straight base line economic zone opened Tuesday. The working-level fisheries talks, the seventh this year, come after the ROK expressed eagerness for an early conclusion of a revised fishing accord. Foreign Minister Yoo Chong-ha said in Seoul last week that the ROK is ready to conclude a new fishing agreement with Japan as early as the end of the year. (Chosun Ilbo, "KOREA, JAPAN CONTINUE FISHERIES TALKS," 11/26/97)

2. ROK Financial Crisis

Senior Presidential Secretary for ROK Foreign Affairs and National Security Ban Ki-moon stated that US President Bill Clinton said Monday that he would be as supportive as he can to help the ROK solve its financial crisis. Clinton made the reassurance in his eighth meeting with ROK President Kim Young-sam, one day before the 5th annual meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum opens. Clinton said he welcomes the ROK's formal application to the International Monetary Fund for loans to pull its financial market out of its problems. The US will express its strong commitment to do what it can to ensure the growth and stability of the ROK economy, Clinton added. (Korea Times, "US TO STAND BEHIND KOREA TO SOLVE FINANCIAL CRISIS," 11/26/97)

3. ROK Submarine Project

Kim Chong-ha, a researcher at the Korean Association of Military Studies at the War Museum in Seoul, on Tuesday questioned the wisdom of the ROK Defense Ministry's decision to order 1,500-ton revamped 209-class submarines from a defense contractor selected without competition. Kim said, "The 209-class subs don't meet our future naval requirements, considering the naval buildup being pursued by China, Russia and Japan, which stress the construction of subs larger than the 1,500-ton class." Addressing technical aspects of the project, Kim said that Germany has no experience building submarines equipped with air independent propulsion systems but that the revamped 209-class submarines will be their first "test ship" with such systems. The German company HDW, which is supplying the ROK Navy with 1,200-ton submarines in partnership with Daewoo Heavy Industries, is expected also to produce the 1,500-ton submarines for Korea. Kim added, "Because subs are a strategic weapon that has direct bearings on national security, the ministry is called on to maintain more than one contractor in order to receive spare parts and maintenance in case one is rendered disabled. But the ministry violated this and virtually recognized the monopoly of one contractor." Kim observed that Hyundai Heavy Industries asked the ministry to allow it in as partner with Daewoo in the building of 3,000-ton class submarines instead of the 1,500-ton class. (Korea Times, "EXPERT QUESTIONS WISDOM ON 1,500-TON SUBS," 11/26/97)

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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