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I. United States

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1. Four-Party Peace Talks

US State Department Spokesman James Rubin ("STATE DEPARTMENT NOON BRIEFING," USIA Transcript, 01/26/98) said that the DPRK has requested that the intersessional meeting of the four-party peace talks scheduled for February 12 in Beijing be postponed to early March and moved to Geneva. The next four-party plenary session is scheduled for March 16 in Geneva. Rubin said that the US is consulting with the ROK and the PRC. He added, "We have no indication [the DPRK] will not attend the intersessional or the next plenary meeting." Rubin also said that the DPRK "did express the idea that a meeting following the change of government [in the ROK] would be more useful."

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2. Japanese Wives of DPRK Citizens

The Associated Press ("JAPANESE WOMEN RETURN FOR VISIT," Tokyo, 01/27/98) reported that a second group of 12 Japanese wives of DPRK citizens arrived in Tokyo on Tuesday. [Ed. note: See Japanese Wives of DPRK Citizens in the US Section of the November 10, 1997 Daily Report.] It was

the first visit to Japan for the women since they went to the DPRK with their husbands after the end of World War II. During a stopover in Beijing, the women told Japanese reporters that they had been down to one or two meals a day last year, but that they now had more food. They added that even at the worst times they always had at least some food.

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3. US Spy Ship Pueblo

Reuters ("FORMER US SPY SHIP NOW A TOURIST ATTRACTION," Tokyo, 01/26/98) reported that Shinobu Oe, professor emeritus of contemporary history at Japan's Ibaraki University, said Monday that the US spy ship Pueblo, which was captured by the DPRK in January 1968, is now being used as a tourist attraction in the DPRK port of Wonsan. Oe stated, "As far as I know the North Koreans have been showing the ship to Japanese tourists since August." Oe, who recently visited Wonsan, said that DPRK officials at the port gave no information about the ship or how it had been used for the past 30 years.

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4. Japan-ROK Fisheries Dispute

The Associated Press (Kozo Mizoguchi, "SKOREAN FISHERMEN IGNORE JAPAN," Tokyo, 01/26/98) reported that eight ROK fishing boats continued to work off the coast of northern Japan for a second day Monday. Kitashi Mochizuki, a Japanese Fisheries Agency official on Hokkaido, said that the ROK boats ignored warnings by Japanese patrol boats to stay clear.

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5. ROK Financial Crisis

The AP-Dow Jones News Service (Deborah Klosky, "WORLD BANK:KOREA UNEMPLOYMENT MAY BE MAJOR SOCIAL PROBLEM," Washington, 01/27/98) reported that the World Bank on Tuesday released a six-page paper which called for the establishment of social safety nets in addition to restoring investor confidence to solve the East Asian financial crisis. The report said that safety nets can help raise public support for financial reform programs and help to avoid social unrest. The paper warned that, "In ... countries with rigid rules governing hiring and firing, such as Korea, unemployment may for the first time become a significant social problem." It added, "Freer labor markets ... work best when they are accompanied by unemployment insurance."

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6. PRC-Taiwan Relations

The Associated Press (Charles Hutzler, "CHINA PREMIER SEEKS TAIWAN TALKS," Beijing, 01/27/98) reported that the PRC's state-run Xinhua News Agency said that PRC Premier Li Peng on Tuesday appealed again for resuming talks with Taiwan. Li stated, "Realizing complete reunification of the motherland and rejuvenating the nation are the common aspirations shared by the entire Chinese people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait." He also reiterated the PRC position that Taiwan should agree to a "one country, two systems" arrangement similar to Hong Kong. However, Taiwan's United Daily News quoted Chiao Jen-ho, one of Taiwan's chief negotiators with the PRC, as saying, "The Chinese communists lack the guts and courage to accept the fact of the Republic of China's existence."

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7. Russian-Japanese Relations

The Associated Press ("OFFICIAL: RUSSIA, JAPAN NEAR ACCORD," Moscow, 01/26/98) reported that the ITAR-Tass news agency said that Alexander Losyukov, a Russian Foreign Ministry official involved in negotiations with Japan on fishing rights near the disputed Kuril Islands, stated Monday that Russia and Japan are likely to sign an agreement "in a matter of days." Losyukov said, "The final technical stages are nearing their end, and as soon as they are over, the date will be set for the signing."

Agence France-Presse ("RUSSIA, JAPAN DISCUSS MILITARY COOPERATION," Moscow, 01/27/98) reported that, according to the Interfax news agency, Russian Defense Minister Marshal Igor Sergeyev on Tuesday urged Masahiro Akiyama, deputy head of the Japanese defense agency, to agree to closer Japanese-Russian military coordination. General Leonid Ivashov, head of the Russian defense ministry's international cooperation department, said that Russia wanted to plan "relations in the military sphere until the year 2000 to define the level which they will reach by the end of the century." A telephone hot line between the Russian Pacific Fleet and the Japanese navy could be set up as part of confidence-building measures. The two sides agreed to expand military cooperation, and that Admiral Kadzue Natsukawa, the head of the Japanese joint chiefs of staff, will visit Russia in May.

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.

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@anu.edu.au
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