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CONTENTS

I. [United States](#)

1. [DPRK-Australian Talks](#)

2. [DPRK Refugees in PRC](#)

II. [Republic of Korea](#) 1. [US Uranium Shipments to ROK](#)

I. United States

1. DPRK-Australian Talks

Agence France Presse ("NORTH KOREA SENDS ITS FIRST EVER ENVOY TO AUSTRALIA," Canberra, 6/27/01) reported that DPRK Foreign Minister Paek Nam-sun was due in Canberra on Thursday for three days of talks, becoming the first DPRK minister ever to visit Australia. Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said Wednesday that the first aim of the talks would be to maintain the dialogue begun during his visit to the DPRK. However, Downer said, "We have some real concerns about their missile programs, weapons of mass destruction programs or at least about whether such programs exist or not. There are human rights issues we're concerned about as well." He added, "I want to focus first of all on the important broad point that we need dialogue with North Korea--I don't think there's any point in turning our backs on North Korea and wishing it away." Downer also expressed support for the US move to resume dialogue with the DPRK. Paek will also hold high-level talks with other ministers, parliamentary office-holders and senior officials in Canberra and Sydney.

2. DPRK Refugees in PRC

Agence France Presse ("SOUTH KOREA ASKS CHINA TO FREE NORTH KOREANS," Seoul, 6/27/01) reported that the ROK on Wednesday called on the PRC to give asylum to a family of seven DPRK Nationals who have sought refuge at a UN office in Beijing and demanded that they be given safe passage to the ROK. ROK Deputy Foreign Minister Choi Sung-hong told PRC Ambassador Wu Dawei

that the ROK hoped that the PRC would respect the wishes of the DPRK family and let them go to the ROK. Choi was quoted as telling Wu, "We hope Beijing follows the spirit of humanitarianism and respects their free will in deciding their place of settlement." The ROK government also set up a special task force Wednesday to monitor discussions surrounding the family in Beijing. The seven DPRK Nationals entered the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office in Beijing on the morning on June 26. They have demanded refugee status and safe passage to the ROK to escape persecution back home. Yonhap news agency quoted an ROK government official as saying the PRC had requested more time to study the situation before deciding on the asylum request.

Agence France Presse ("HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF NORTH KOREANS SEEK NEW LIVES THROUGH CHINA," Beijing, 6/27/01) reported that the ROK government estimates that between 10,000 and 30,000 DPRK refugees have fled to the PRC, while ROK activists put the figure at up to 200,000, and some estimates even reach as high as 300,000. Reports indicate that many DPRK Nationals have made multiple trips back and forth. Lee Young-hwa, a Tokyo-based representative of the North Korean People Urgent Action Network, said, "The Chinese government has recently stepped up its efforts to tighten border patrols after a request from the North Korean government. Its standard practice is to arrest North Korean refugees and immediately send them back to North Korea."

II. Republic of Korea

1. US Uranium Shipments to ROK

The Korea Herald (Kim Min-hee, "US BASES IN KOREA MAY HAVE RECEIVED PLUTONIUM," 6/27/01) reported that USA Today said on June 24 that two US Air Force bases in the ROK have received shipments of recycled plutonium, which may pose health risks to humans. Citing the outcome of studies recently conducted by the US Federal government, the report said that as much as 250,000 tons of "tainted" uranium has been circulated among hundreds of the country's government plants, private firms and university labs in the last 50 years. The report said that the US weapons program has also sent thousands of tons of depleted uranium to overseas sites, whose list includes Suwon Air Base and Cheongju Air Base. The report indicated that most of the uranium probably contained negligible levels of impurities, no more than those expected from natural uranium. However, it said the US studies found that over a dozen US recycling facilities had processed uranium "in ways that concentrated its highly radioactive contaminants," which included plutonium. The report did not rule out the possibility that radioactive materials could have infiltrated the soil and underground water surrounding these facilities. [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for June 27, 2001.]

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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