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I. United States

1. ROK Missile Development

Reuters ("S. KOREA TEST-FIRES ITS OWN GUIDED MISSILE," Seoul, 10/27/97) reported that the ROK Ministry of National Defense said that the ROK on Monday test-fired its first domestically designed, short-range ground-to-surface guided missile. A ministry spokesman said the test-firing of the Chunma missile by the Agency for Defense Development was at an unspecified western coastal area. The government-backed agency said in a statement that 12 domestic companies and a foreign firm developed the missile, which has a range of 6.2 miles.

2. US-ROK Military Exercise

The Associated Press ("US, SKOREA BEGIN MILITARY EXERCISE," Seoul, 10/27/97) reported that the US and the ROK began their largest joint military exercise of the year Monday despite protests

from the DPRK. The annual two-week field training exercise began with most of the 650,000 ROK troops and 37,000 US soldiers stationed in the ROK participating. US and ROK military officials described the exercise as defensive.

Reuters ("NORTH KOREA VOWS TO STRENGTHEN MILITARY," Tokyo, 10/27/97) reported that the DPRK Korean Central News Agency said that a spokesman for the DPRK Foreign Ministry condemned the joint US-ROK military exercise as an aggressive maneuver and vowed to strengthen the DPRK's armed forces. "Facts prove that the exercise is not an 'annual exercise'... but an aggressive maneuver for surprising [sic] attack on the DPRK," the spokesman was quoted as saying. He continued, "We will strengthen our armed forces in every way so that we can smash any provocation of the enemy at one stroke at any time and in any place." The spokesman added, "No one can predict when the current military drill will develop into real war against the DPRK."

3. DPRK Military Threat

The Associated Press (Harry Dunphy, "SHELTON: N. KOREA IS A THREAT," Washington, 10/24/97) reported that Henry H. Shelton, the new chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Friday that the US-ROK alliance is "fully prepared to deal decisively with the full spectrum of military operations, including fighting and winning a major theater war on the Korean peninsula." Shelton described the internal situation in the DPRK as "extraordinarily precarious," and said that the DPRK was a "greater challenge now than at any time since 1953." Shelton said that, as a result of the situation in the DPRK, the US and the ROK for the first time have to consider a "wide range of scenarios in addition to armed conflict," including a breakdown in public order in the DPRK, a massive need for humanitarian assistance, and a large number of refugees coming across the border. Shelton stated there were reports that the 1 million-person DPRK army has been expanded by up to 10 percent. He added that the DPRK's pursuit of ballistic missile technology and weapons of mass destruction posed an even greater threat to regional stability. "Facing a potential scenario in which the government and social structure collapse, we must guard against the possibility (the DPRK army) will resort to an irrational act" such as an attack across the demilitarized zone, he said. He stated that the US believes "without reservation that deterrence remains the best means to prevent aggression" from the DPRK. Shelton added, "In the unfortunate event that deterrence fails, I am confident that the U.S.-Republic of Korea war-fighting capability is sufficient to defeat rapidly an aggressor." Shelton will make his first trip to the ROK next month, accompanying Defense Secretary William Cohen.

4. Four-Party Peace Talks

The Washington Post carried a letter to the editor from Djun Kil Kim, Minister for Public Affairs at the ROK Embassy in Washington, ("THE KOREAN TALKS," Washington, 10/27/97, A24) stating that the embassy was "deeply disturbed by Jeffrey Smith's Oct. 13 article, 'U.S. Aides Pessimistic on Korea Talks.'" [Ed. note: See "Four-Party Peace Talks" in the US Section of the October 13 Daily Report.] Arguing that "the article involves the U.S. government in openly and unjustifiably interfering in the presidential election in Korea," the letter stated that "we understand that the U.S. government has long and consistently maintained strict neutrality in Korea's domestic politics. To state that it prefers one candidate to another in Korea, quoting anonymous sources ..., is unwarranted." The letter said that "there is no serious rift between the Republic of Korea and the United States regarding policies toward North Korea." It also argued that "the statement that the republic's rigid posture is responsible for lack of progress in the four-party talks also is misleading. Korea has taken a sufficiently forthcoming attitude." The letter also disputed the assertion that there is no progress in the four-party talks, pointing out that "North Korea agreed in principle to accept our proposal, and we have been able to engage North Korean officials in a series of preparatory talks." The letter also warned that "the article gives the impression of sending a signal to North

Korea to wait until a new government is installed in Korea before coming to the four-party talks. This is misleading to North Korea and damaging to the progress in the talks. To think that the policies of the Republic of Korea will change easily when a new government is installed overlooks the fact that [South] Korea's policies toward North Korea stand firmly on the support of the Korean people." The letter concluded, "The way we handle the issues of the Korean peninsula not only concerns the security of Koreans and many Americans in Korea; it also affects the welfare of millions starving in North Korea who need urgent assistance."

5. ROK Presidential Election

United Press International ("OPPOSITION GAINS GROUND IN S.KOREA," Seoul, 10/27/97) reported that recent polls of ROK voters suggest that infighting in the ruling New Korea Party is boosting the chances of a victory for opposition leader Kim Dae-jung in December's presidential elections.

6. US-PRC Nuclear Cooperation

The New York Times (Steven Erlanger, "ACCORD NEAR ON ATOM SALES TO THE CHINESE," Washington, 10/25/97) reported that US officials are optimistic that a US-PRC agreement on nuclear nonproliferation will be ready by the Wednesday meeting between US President Bill Clinton and PRC President Jiang Zemin. The article quoted an unnamed senior US official as saying, "We have made very good progress, we are getting there, but we are not there yet." Under the agreement, the PRC reportedly would phase out its nuclear cooperation with Iran.

7. Nuclear Nonproliferation Talks

Agence France-Presse ("NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION TALKS TO BE HELD IN JAPAN," Tokyo, 10/27/97) reported that the Japanese Foreign Ministry said Monday that Japan will host a three-day meeting of the Missile Technology Control Regime starting November 4 to discuss the control of missile exports and prevention of regional missile proliferation. Members of the regime will look at "ways to prevent regional missile proliferation and other relevant issues, with a view to further enhancing the effectiveness of the export control" by the regime's partners, the ministry said.

8. US-Russia Computer Sale Conflict

The New York Times (Jeff Gerth and Michael R. Gordon, "RUSSIAN NUCLEAR LAB EVADED RULES TO GET COMPUTERS," 10/27/97) reported that Russian and US officials say that a Russian nuclear-weapons laboratory secretly acquired sixteen advanced IBM computers late last year, using Moscow-based middlemen to evade US export rules. US officials said that a federal grand jury in Washington is examining IBM's role to determine whether the company or its representatives violated laws governing the sale of computers to nuclear-weapons installations. The transaction came after IBM had failed to gain federal approval for a sale of similar computers to the lab, the article stated. The Russian purchase grew out of a diplomatic misunderstanding that arose during negotiations over a total ban on nuclear tests, the article stated. Russian officials insist that they were enticed to sign the ban with hints that they could later buy high-performance computers from the US, but State Department spokesman James Rubin said, "We never promised to provide these kinds of computers," adding that the US has been trying since December 1995 to dispel Russia's mistaken impression. Russia has offered to move the computers from the nuclear laboratories to civilian locations, and the US has told the Russians this might be acceptable, provided there is a way to monitor how they are used.

II. Republic of Korea 10/27/97

1. ROK Nuclear Weapon Plan

The Joong Ang Ilbo ("EVIDENCE OF 'NUCLEAR WEAPON BY 1985' PLAN," 10/27/97) reported that the late ROK President Park Chung-hee pursued secret nuclear weapon development with the goal of possessing a nuclear bomb by the year 1985, despite US opposition. President Park also disguised the program for extracting plutonium needed for manufacturing a nuclear bomb under the name of "Chemical treatment replacement" at the beginning of 1976 in order to avoid US surveillance. Extraction was to be completed in 1983.

2. Reunion of Divided Families

A Red Cross source said Sunday that the ROK National Red Cross will propose to the DPRK on Monday that a place be opened inside the truce village of Panmunjom or anywhere else on the Korean Peninsula where dispersed family members in the ROK and the DPRK can meet. The ROK Red Cross will also push the realization of that proposal in the forthcoming third round of inter-Korean Red Cross talks. The source said that the ROK side is willing to locate proposed meeting place within the DPRK. The ROK government has offered setting up such a place inside Panmunjom or in a southern city near the Demilitarized Zone. The ROK and the DPRK agreed to open a place for family reunions in their 1992 basic agreement, but have not implemented the plan. (Korea Herald, "KNRC TO OFFER FAMILY REUNION SITE TO NORTH," 10/27/97)

3. ROK Presidential Election

Opinion polls predict victory for opposition leader Kim Dae-jung in the presidential election, as his popularity rating is 8-10 percentage points ahead of runner-up Rhee In-je. For the past three months, the ratings of the five major candidates have remained unchanged, with Kim Dae-jung first, followed by former Kyonggi-do governor Rhee In-je, ruling New Korea Party president Lee Hoi-chang, former Seoul mayor Cho Soon and United Liberal Democrats (ULD) president Kim Jong-pil. A Gallup poll conducted Sunday showed Kim Dae-jung leading with 34.3 percent, compared to 26.8 percent for Rhee, 16.1 percent for Lee Hoi-chang, 5.5 percent for Cho Soon and 3.3 percent for Kim Jong-pil. The poll indicated that even if a coalition were made between candidates, no unified combination could beat Kim Dae-jung. Gallup said that 54.7 percent of the respondents gave opposition leader Kim the best chance to ultimately win the election, the first time that more than half of Gallup respondents predicted Kim's victory. (Korea Times, "OPINION POLLS INDICATE KIM DAE-JUNG MOVING CLOSER TOWARD VICTORY IN DECEMBER ELECTION," 10/27/97)

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