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I. United States

1. DPRK High-Level US Visit

US State Department Spokesman Jamie Rubin ("US STATE DEPARTMENT DAILY NOON BRIEFING," The Office of International Information Programs, US Department of State, 2/28/00) said that contrary to reports from the ROK, the US does expect to have a meeting with the DPRK in New York to finalize preparations for a high-level DPRK visit to Washington. Rubin stated that the meeting is still on track for next month. Rubin stated that, "we have always demonstrated a willingness to continue work on the liaison office effort. We have expressed a willingness to work on counter-terrorism issues, by explaining in some detail to the North Koreans what steps they need to take to remove North Korea from the terrorism list. And those efforts continue."

2. US-PRC Military Talks

Agence France Presse ("CHINA WARNS US MILITARY COMMANDER: NO COMPROMISE OVER TAIWAN," Beijing, 2/29/00) and the Associated Press (John Leicester, "U.S. ADMIRAL VISITS

CHINESE MILITARY CHIEFS," Beijing, 2/29/00) reported that the PRC's official Xinhua news agency said that US Admiral Dennis Blair met separately with the deputy general chief of staff of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), Xiong Guangkai, and the PRC's naval commander Shi Yunsheng on February 28. Blair also met PRC Defense Minister General Chi Hoatian on Tuesday. Chi told Blair that the PRC would never rule out using force to win back Taiwan. Chi said that last week's policy White Paper on Taiwan reflected the PRC's determination on the issue because "the reunification cause of China is irreversible." However, Chi added that the PRC wanted to follow a peaceful path, but if it was foiled it would have to keep all options open. Chi also called on the US to stop all arms sales to Taiwan, and to "do things that genuinely promote the peaceful reunification of China." Blair also spoke with the chief of the general staff of the People's Liberation Army, General Fu Quanyou. Fu told Blair, "Sino-US relations are right now at an important period which faces both opportunities for improvement and development, and problems calling for urgent handling, and the Taiwan issue is a key one. The US government should not let the Sino-US relations and bilateral military ties which have shown a trend of resumption and improvement suffer setbacks once again." [Ed. note: The Associated Press article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for February 29, 2000.]

3. PRC View of US Intervention in Taiwan

The Washington Times (Bill Gertz, "CHINA THREATENS U.S. WITH MISSILE STRIKE," 2/29/00) reported that the PRC's People's Liberation Army (PLA) Daily said in a commentary on February 28 that the PRC could resort to long- range missile attacks on the US during a regional conflict. [Ed. note: See "PRC View of US Intervention in Taiwan" in the Daily Report for February 28.] According to US Defense Department officials familiar with the translation, the article was unusually harsh and echoed a private warning made in 1995 by PRC Lieutenant General Xiong Guangkai. One US official said that the article appeared to be a response to a statement by Walter Slocombe, US undersecretary of defense for policy, last week that said the PRC would suffer "incalculable consequences" if it attacked the island. Slocombe's statement brought a complaint from some officials at the White House and State Department who objected to the Defense Department's tough stance. [Ed. note: This article was included as a Top Story in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for February 29, 2000.]

4. US Military Exercises

The Washington Times (Bill Gertz, "CHINA THREATENS U.S. WITH MISSILE STRIKE," 2/29/00) reported that several ships from the carrier battle group led by the USS Kitty Hawk began conducting exercises in the Pacific on February 23. US Defense Department officials said privately that the carrier deployment was part of US diplomatic efforts to discourage the PRC from conducting threatening war games. A senior military official said that the carrier exercises were scheduled weeks ago. The ships are deployed in waters east of central Japan and will be at sea for 12 days before returning to their home port of Yokosuka, Japan. Officially, US Defense Department spokesman Lieutenant Commander Terry Sutherland said that the Kitty Hawk is engaged in "general quarters" and the deployment was not related to the PRC's release of the white paper or the upcoming Taiwanese presidential elections. Susan Shirk, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia, wrote an unofficial electronic message to a group of California academics recently saying the carrier will not be sent to the region. Shirk wrote, "want to let everyone know that one carrier, the Kitty Hawk, is engaged in routine training off the coast of Japan, no intention to move near the Strait, nothing to do with Taiwan, white paper, etc." [Ed. note: This article was included as a Top Story in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for February 29, 2000.]

II. Republic of Korea

1. DPRK-Australia Relations

The Korea Herald (Kim Ji-ho, "N.K. OFFICIALS TO VISIT AUSTRALIA LATER THIS YEAR FOR RAPPROCHEMENT TALKS," Seoul, 02/29/00) reported that ROK officials said on Tuesday that Australia and the DPRK agreed in principle to reinstate diplomatic relations. A four-member Australian delegation, led by First Assistant Foreign Secretary Colin Heseltine, returned from a five-day trip to Pyongyang and briefed ROK officials on the results of the visit on February 27. Heseltine, who met with DPRK Vice Foreign Minister Pak Kil-yon and other officials during the visit, said that he delivered his government's message to DPRK officials, which included an invitation to visit Canberra during the second half of this year. The ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade quoted Heseltine as saying, "the North Korean officials expressed their strong hopes that the two countries would open embassies in each others' capitals as soon as possible." The ministry official said that while in Pyongyang, the Australian delegation made a set of suggestions for the early resumption of diplomatic ties. They called for the DPRK to improve relations with the US, maintain a moratorium on missile tests, and agree to participate in direct talks with the ROK and in the four-party dialogue.

2. DPRK-US Talks

The Korea Herald ("N.K.-U.S. HIGH-LEVEL PREPARATORY TALKS LIKELY TO BE DELAYED UNTIL NEXT MONTH," Seoul, 02/29/00) reported that an ROK government official said that the DPRK-US talks scheduled for this month to prepare for high-level bilateral dialogue are likely to be put off until next month. The anonymous official said, "there is no response on this matter from the DPRK yet. The schedule will inevitably have to be readjusted. North Korea committed itself to the talks, so the talks will eventually open. But due to procedural matters such as visa issuances, they will likely take place next month."

3. Inter-Korean Fishing Accord

The Korea Herald (Kim Ji-ho, "PRIVATE INTER-KOREAN FISHING ACCORD FACES GOVERNMENT IRE, INTERAGENCY RIFT," Seoul, 02/29/00) and The Korea Times (Son Key-young, "INTER-KOREAN PRIVATE FISHING PACT PROMPTS AUTHORITIES' SCRUTINY," Seoul, 02/27/00) reported that an ROK private fishing industry group that struck a joint fishing accord with its DPRK counterpart without prior government approval reiterated its resolve on Tuesday to push ahead with the project. Responses from related government agencies to the private agreement were varied. Some noted additional obstacles to the landmark accord becoming a reality. Members of the Korean Fishermen Union stressed the validity of their agreement, describing it as "credible and authoritative." Officials at the ROK Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries downplayed the plan in their comments on February 26's announcement that the DPRK had agreed to open part of its waters to ROK fishermen. They called the initiative "unrealistic," and hinted that the agreement could be used as DPRK political propaganda. ROK Unification Ministry officials were also cautious, saying that the government should examine problematic points within the private-level agreement before allowing the parties involved to proceed with the plan.

Joongang Ilbo ("NORTH KOREA OPENS ITS HARBORS," Seoul, 02/28/00) and The Korea Times (Lee Soo-jeong, "S. KOREAN BOATS LIKELY TO START OPERATIONS IN NORTH IN MID-MARCH," Seoul, 02/28/00) reported that the DPRK announced on February 28 that its harbors and fishing zones on the eastern coast will be open to ROK fishing vessels. The ROK government will make a

decision on whether or not to allow ROK vessels to enter the DPRK's fishery zones after looking into certain agreements between the Federation for Fishery Association (FFA) and the DPRK. Kim Yong-hae, an advisor to the FFA, said, "we have reached an agreement allowing ROK fishermen to enter DPRK harbors during periods of heavy wind and/or dangerous waves. Ships from South Korea will be guaranteed access to wireless communications in the North Korean fishing zones."

4. DPRK Human Rights

The Korea Herald ("KIM PESSIMISTIC ON IMPROVING N.K. HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION," Seoul, 02/29/00) reported that ROK President Kim Dae-jung said that it will be difficult to make significant progress in attempting to convince the DPRK to improve its human rights situation. Kim said in an international conference on the engagement policy toward the DPRK, "the interest of the international community in North Korea's human rights conditions may have a limited effect, but it would be difficult to produce significant results under any circumstances. Eradicating poverty is the most important step in terms of North Korean human rights." Kim also said that the DPRK was most likely to follow the paths of the PRC and Vietnam, by seeking liberalization and reform while adhering to its system.

5. ROK View of DPRK Leader

The Korea Times (Lee Chang-sup, "PRESIDENT KIM DESCRIBES KIM JONG-IL AS PRAGMATIST," Seoul, 02/29/00) reported that ROK President Kim Dae-jung described DPRK leader Kim Jong-il as a pragmatist who has so far honored his commitment not to develop nuclear weapons. During an interview with German weekly magazine Der Spiegel, Kim Dae-jung said that he does not know many details about the DPRK leader, but said he "might be a pragmatist and he appears to be in full control of all North Korean affairs." Another factor that made Kim Dae-jung believe Kim Jong-il is a pragmatist is that the DPRK has sent its officials to the Four-Party Talks. Kim Dae-jung added, "when we take all these things into account, we can surmise that we can regard the North Korean leadership as a partner for dialogue."

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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