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I. United States

1. DPRK-EU Relations

The Associated Press ("EU COMMISSION LAYING GROUNDWORK FOR TIES WITH N KOREA," Brussels, 03/30/01) reported that officials said Friday that the European Commission is preparing the possible establishment of diplomatic relations between the European Union (EU) and the DPRK. A decision to establish full EU-DPRK diplomatic relations is expected to be discussed by the member nations in the coming weeks, but the Commission is already taking some procedural steps to smooth the process. EU Commission spokesman Gunnar Wiegand stated, "We will have to see if all member states approve this." He added that the decision to send an EU mission to the Korean Peninsula was taken after consultation with the US, stating, "We have the same objectives."

2. US Policy toward DPRK

The Washington Post carried an opinion article by Senator John F. Kerry, Democrat-Massachusetts ("ENGAGE NORTH KOREA," 03/30/01, 29) which said that the US has no hope of reducing the

DPRK's missile threat unless it constructively engages the DPRK. Kerry argued, "A reversal by the Bush administration puts that policy of engagement at risk and is troubling news for all those concerned with our interests on the Korean peninsula." He noted, "Our South Korean allies -- on the front lines and under no illusions about the regime in North Korea or its leader, Kim Jong Il -- want us to move quickly to resume the missile talks.... We should listen ... carefully." He added, "We can all be sympathetic to the Bush administration's desire to study the proposals left on the table by the previous administration. But even while analyzing new proposals, what better way to test the possibilities than by maintaining an open dialogue?" Kerry argued, "Delaying missile talks is a mistake. In fact, delay -- and Secretary Powell's lukewarm endorsement of the agreed framework -- could send a negative signal about the nature and direction of our policy." He concluded, "There is little to lose and much to gain by returning to the bargaining table. There is considerable risk in leaving the North Korea missile threat to chance." [Ed. Note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for March 30.]

3. ROK-DPRK Talks

The Associated Press ("INTER-KOREAN RED CROSS TALKS NEXT WEEK IN DOUBT," Seoul, 03/30/01) reported that ROK officials were doubtful Friday about whether the DPRK would respond soon to their proposal to hold Red Cross talks in Seoul next week. Kim Hyong-sup, a spokesman for the ROK Red Cross, stated, "We still have some time, but the outlook is not so bright." Kim Jung-ro, a spokesman for the ROK Unification Ministry, said that by canceling meetings with the ROK, "We think the North is sending a message to the new Bush administration, which has occasionally indicated a tougher stance against it." ROK officials said that they hoped the DPRK would resume exchanges with the ROK once it coordinates its policy toward the US.

4. US Troops in ROK

The Associated Press ("US, S KOREA END TALKS ON US TROOPS UPKEEP; TO MEET IN JUNE," Seoul 03/30/01) reported that the ROK Defense Ministry said Friday that the US and the ROK ended two days of talks Friday without agreement on sharing the cost of US troops stationed in the ROK. ROK officials said that the two allies were expected to hold several more talks before finalizing details at the annual Security Consultative Meeting to be held in Washington late this year. Under a three-year agreement that went into effect in 1999, the ROK is required to gradually increase its share of the upkeep cost, reaching US$444 million this year. That agreement expires this year. Marisa Lino, a senior negotiator at the US State Department, led the US delegation, while the ROK side was led by Lieutenant General Kim Jong-hwan, policy counselor to the defense minister.

5. Comfort Women Issue

The Associated Press (Mari Yamaguchi, "JAPAN COURT NIXES SEX SLAVE FUNDS," Tokyo, 03/29/01) reported that the Hiroshima High Court on Thursday overturned a 1998 district court ruling that ordered the government to pay a total of US$7,260 to three women who were forced to provide sex to Japanese soldiers during World War II. Presiding judge Toshiaki Kawanami said that abducting women for forced labor and sexual slavery was not a serious constitutional violation. The three women and seven people forced into slave labor had filed a lawsuit with the Yamaguchi District Court in western Japan in 1992, seeking about US$3.1 million in official compensation.

II. Republic of Korea

1. ROK-US Joint Military Exercise

The Korea Herald ("PYONGYANG EXPRESSES OUTRAGE AT U.S.-KOREA MILITARY EXERCISES," Seoul, 03/30/01) reported that the DPRK on Thursday criticized the US for conducting a joint military exercise with the ROK, but refrained from criticizing the ROK. In its report, the DPRK's Korean Central Broadcasting Station said that the joint ROK-US military drill that started Tuesday for a three-day run "reflects the United States' belligerent scheme to prepare for a war against the North and block peace and reunification on the Korean Peninsula." It referred to the first joint ROK-US military drill this year, dubbed "Crisis Action Team (CAT)" or "Rapid Thunder." Citing an unidentified ROK military official, the television station said that the exercise, involving all divisions or higher military units, focused on checking the emergency communication networks among military units. In response to the DPRK's criticism, a spokesman for US Forces Korea (USFK) said that the Rapid Thunder exercise "is a ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command (CFC) staff exercise designed to test the responses of key personnel in fictional emergency situations."

2. DPRK-US Relations

The Korea Herald (Kim Ji-ho, "NORTH KOREAN NEWS MEDIA CONTINUES ATTACKS ON U.S.," Seoul, 03/30/01) reported that the DPRK news media Thursday continued to accuse the US administration under President George W. Bush of attempting to block the reunification of the Korean Peninsula. "The Bush administration is getting on the nerves of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and hurting its feelings," said the website of the Korea Central News Agency, quoting an article from Rodong Sinmun (the Workers' Daily). It said that the US president's remarks were adventurous and intentionally designed to provoke hostility between the two Koreas, adding that the US is raising "silly questions" about the DPRK in order to dominate the peninsula.

3. ROK-Cambodia Talks on DPRK

The Korea Herald ("CAMBODIAN PREMIER TO DISCUSS N. KOREA, ECONOMIC TIES ON VISIT," Seoul, 03/30/01) reported that ROK officials announced Thursday that Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen will visit the ROK April 9-11 to discuss economic cooperation and the DPRK. Hun Sen will hold summit talks with President Kim Dae- jung April 10, Chong Wa Dae spokesman Park Joon-young said. They added that President Kim hopes that the Cambodian government will support the ROK's efforts to improve ties with the DPRK and induce the DPRK to undergo reform and implement an open-door policy. Cambodia has been a longtime ally of the DPRK since the two countries formed formal ties in 1964.

4. US Troops in ROK

The Korea Herald (Kang Seok-jae, "WASHINGTON MIGHT ASK SEOUL TO SHARE TROOP COSTS BURDEN," 03/30/01) reported that the ROK Defense Ministry said that the ROK and the US opened high-level talks in Seoul on Thursday to determine the ROK's financial contribution to maintaining US troops stationed on the Korean Peninsula. ROK Army Lieutenant General Kim Jong-hwan, policy advisor to the defense minister, led a nine-member ROK team for the two-day talks, while the 16-member US contingent was led by Marisa Lino, senior negotiator for base access and burden-sharing at the US Department of State. An anonymous ROK Defense Ministry official stated, "The two sides will have a series of working- and high-level negotiations over the next six months to

determine the amount and method of Seoul's defense cost sharing for the maintenance of U.S. troops in 2002 and after." The official said that the final agreement would be signed at the annual ROK-US Security Consultative Meeting (SCM), to be held in Washington in November. He added, "We started holding the negotiations as our SOFA Special Agreement on defense cost-sharing, signed in February 1998, expires at the end of this year." [Ed. Note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for March 30.]

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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