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I. United States

1. US-DPRK Liaison Office

US State Department Spokesman Nicholas Burns ("STATE DEPARTMENT NOON BRIEFING, JAN.

29," USIA Transcript, 1/30/97) denied press media reports that the US and the DPRK have reached a tentative agreement on the opening of a Liaison Office. "We have as a longer-term objective, and we set this with the authorities in Pyongyang, the opening of Liaison Offices in our respective capitals, but there's been no agreement to do that. There are some remaining technical details that need to be worked out before we can agree to the establishment of Liaison Offices," Burns said. In response to a question, Burns also said that he had no information concerning reports that DPRK assets were frozen in US banks.

2. Four-Party Peace Talks Briefing

The Associated Press (Robert H. Reid, "U.S.-KOREA TALKS IN DOUBT," United Nations, 1/31/97) and United Press International ("N.KOREA BALKING AT PEACE BRIEFING," Washington, 1/31/97) reported that Han Song-ryol of the DPRK mission to the United Nations said Friday that the DPRK will not attend the four-party peace talks briefing with the US and the ROK next week until negotiations with a private US firm on a proposed grain sale are "concluded satisfactorily." The meeting, already delayed once, had been set for February 5 in New York. Han said the DPRK is now linking attendance of the briefing to the successful completion of talks with Cargill Inc., a commodity firm, on the s

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that lead to the DPRK statement of regret for the submarine incursion incident. The diplomatic snarl also threatens to create problems between the US and the ROK. In Seoul, ROK Prime Minister Lee Soo-sung complained Friday that Washington's agreement to postpone the talks pending completion of the grain deal violated a US pledge not to include food on the agenda of the New York talks. "And then, the United States came to us to seek our understanding, which is giving suffering to our government," Lee said.

3. DPRK-Taiwan Nuclear Waste Deal

The Associated Press ("TAIWAN-N. KOREA ACCORD THREATENED," Seoul, 1/31/97) reported that ROK Prime Minister Lee Soo-sung said Friday that the DPRK's plan to store Taiwan's nuclear waste could jeopardize the deal to build replacement nuclear reactors in the country. Lee's comments were the first by the ROK publicly linking the nuclear reactor construction project to the DPRK's contract with the Taiwan Power Co. to ship up to 200,000 barrels of nuclear waste to the DPRK for storage. The ROK is the main financier of the US\$5 billion contract to build two reactors in the DPRK under the 1994 accord by which the DPRK has frozen its nuclear program. The new reactors will replace one capable of producing weapons-grade plutonium. Meanwhile, the DPRK's official Communist party newspaper Rodong Sinmun published comments accusing new US Defense Secretary William Cohen and other "US conservative hard-liners" of trying to kill the 1994 nuclear agreement and promote policies hostile toward the DPRK. The newspaper attacked Cohen's recent remarks at a Senate Armed Forces Committee hearing in which he stressed the importance of a US military role in East Asia to cope with security threats from the DPRK.

United Press International ("DUMPING THREATENS TAIWAN -S.KOREA TIES," Seoul, 1/30/97) reported that Kim Ha-chung, secretary general for Asia and Pacific Affairs in the ROK foreign ministry, said Thursday that plans by Taiwan's state-run power company to export nuclear waste to the DPRK could sever ties between Seoul and Taipei. Kim said the ROK is determined to block the shipments. "We are ready to risk losing any relations to deal with the issue," Yonhap news agency quoted Kim as saying.

The Associated Press (Annie Huang, "TAIWAN EXPELS ANTI-NUKE S.KOREANS," Taipei, 1/30/97) reported that Taiwan expelled six ROK anti-nuclear activists Thursday for staging a hunger strike to protest Taiwan's plans to ship nuclear waste to the DPRK. Police chased away the six members of the group Green Korea after they exchanged punches with a Taiwanese right-wing nationalist group during the second day of their protest outside the state-run Taiwan Power Co. The protesters were later rounded up and put on a flight to Seoul. At the airport, protest leader Jang Won said the group would continue efforts to block Taiwan Power's plan to ship up to 200,000 barrels of low-level nuclear waste to the DPRK for storage.

4. DPRK Defectors

The Associated Press (Sang-Hun Choe, "S. KOREA GRILLS N. KOREANS," Seoul, 1/30/97) reported that eight DPRK defectors, placed on stage Friday by the ROK government after the opposition charged that their arrival was a public relations move, raised more questions than they answered. The government claims the eight, members of two families, slipped into the PRC last March, then set sail in a smuggler's boat across a stormy sea for the ROK last week. But opposition politicians claim the eight had long been in the custody of ROK intelligence agents in the PRC and were trotted out to divert attention from domestic political problems. At the news conference, a spokesman for the ROK's intelligence agency told reporters not to ask any questions that would summon answers "vital to national security," and repeatedly interrupted questions about how the families' journey. Asked to explain how they arrived at the port of Incheon wearing clean, dry clothes hours after reportedly being plucked from the islet during a storm, defector Kim Young Jin said he couldn't remember.

Also, Kim's 14-year-old son, Kim Hae Gwang, admitted that what was described by ROK news media as his diary of the family's flight was in fact not a diary, but an account written after the fact to make their case more appealing. "After we arrived in China, a certain Mr. Park asked me to write the diary so that we could get help more easily from the South," he said. He declined to further identify Park.

5. ROK National Security Law Disputed

United Press International ("S.KOREA LEGAL CHANGE CRITICIZED," Washington, 1/30/97) reported that the US State Department, in its annual human rights report, says that the ROK refuses to amend a repressive security law and continues delaying reform that will improve workers' rights, despite pressure from the US. The State Department report offers some unusually specific criticisms of Seoul, one of Washington's closest allies in Asia, for security practices that border on being undemocratic and for recent efforts to implement labor laws that will pave the way for admission to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The State Department report says, "The use or threatened use of the National Security Law continued to infringe upon citizens' civil liberties" by permitting police to physically abuse suspects and denying them the right to counsel. And the new labor law, passed during a secret, midnight session last month, omits "key workers' rights provisions."

6. ROK Financial Scandal

Reuters ("S.KOREA ARRESTS HANBO FOUNDER," Seoul, 1/31/97) reported that ROK state prosecutors on Friday arrested Chung Tae-soo, founder of the Hanbo Group, over the loan scandal involving Hanbo Steel Co., the flagship subsidiary of the ROK's 14th-biggest conglomerate. One prosecutor said Chung was charged with fraud, illegally issuing cheques and violating the law on mutual trust and savings companies. Prosecutors accused Chung of continuing to issue promissory notes even after he knew that Hanbo faced insolvency. He was also accused of illegally withdrawing loans from the Hanbo Group's trust and savings unit. Meanwhile, the government took steps to rescue the steel-making firm. Finance and Economy Minister Han Seung-soo reported to President Kim Young-sam that about 100 billion won would be set aside to keep Hanbo Steel running and to help the company's suppliers weather Hanbo's problems. The fund would also be used to pay wages of workers at Hanbo's suppliers and sub-contractors.

II. Republic of Korea

1. Four-Party Peace Talks Briefing

ROK officials are raising concerns that a US-ROK briefing for DPRK officials on the proposed four-way peace talks may be further delayed beyond February 5. However, they continue to state that the ROK and the US will make no concessions to induce the DPRK to attend the briefing. On Wednesday, the DPRK made clear its intention to link negotiations on grain imports to the briefing. A spokesman for the DPRK Foreign Ministry stated that the DPRK was forced to delay the briefing because it needed to coordinate a stance with the US on the provision of food. In this regard, a ROK official stated that the DPRK is demanding that the US administration pressure Cargill Inc. to accept the DPRK's terms regarding their purchase of grain. The official said the DPRK is also asking that US\$11 million of DPRK assets currently frozen in the US be released. The US so far has given no positive answer to those requests. A ROK official reiterated that Seoul will not provide aid to the DPRK regardless of whether it attends the four-party talks or the briefing session. The official expressed the opinion that the DPRK's delay may not be an attempt to gain additional concessions but instead may reflect a new rift within the DPRK leadership over the wisdom of attending the four-party talks. (The Korea Herald, "FURTHER DELAY OF PEACE TALKS BRIEFING FEARED; SEOUL, WASHINGTON TO MAKE NO CONCESSIONS TO INDUCE DPRKN ATTENDANCE," Seoul, 01/31/97)

On Wednesday, the DPRK declared that it would attend the four-party peace talks briefing if the US guarantees the delivery of 500,000 tons of crops via Cargill Inc. or an international aid package. Cargill Inc., the main contractor for grain sales to the DPRK, is currently refusing to deliver grain without a guarantee of payment by the DPRK. This US\$100 million request by the DPRK is expected to obscure the future of the proposed briefing session which was delayed by a week at the request of the DPRK. (Hankyoreh Shinmun, Jung Yon-ju, "DPRK WILLING TO ATTEND NOT ONLY BRIEFING SESSION BUT ALSO FOUR-WAY PEACE TALKS IF US GUARANTEE DELIVERY OF 500 THOUSAND TONS OF CROP," Washington DC, 01/31/97)

The US National Security Council (NSC) Asian Chief Sandy Christoff will make an urgent visit to the ROK to discuss matters in regards to the briefing session and the four-party peace talks in relation to the DPRK's most recent proposal. Christoff is to meet with leading ROK foreign relations and security officials from the ROK Blue House and Ministry of Foreign Relations. ROK government officials from the ministry of foreign affairs, ministry of defense, the Blue House, and the Agency for National Security Planning are reported to have convened yesterday to discuss this matter. Reports state that the ROK government is looking positively at the DPRK's new proposal since it implies that it will participate in the four-party peace talks. (Hankyoreh Shinmun, Kang Tae-ho, "US NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL ASIAN CHIEF MAKES URGENT VISIT TO SOUTH KOREA," Seoul, 01/31/97)

2. DPRK-Taiwan Nuclear Waste Deal

A ROK delegation comprised of lawmakers and leaders of environmental groups will fly to Taipei today in a bid to deter Taiwan's plans to ship its nuclear waste to the DPRK. The delegation includes Representatives Ahn Sang-soo, Kim Jong-bae, Lee Bu-young and Lee Mi-kyung from the ruling New Korea Party and the opposition National Congress for New Politics, and general secretary Choi Yul of the Korean Federation of Environmental Movements (KFEM). According to KFEM, nuclear expert Dr. Lee Hang-kyu and other experts will also join the delegation. During their stay, the 13 delegates are scheduled to visit the Taiwanese economic and foreign ministers and the Taiwan Power Co. (Taipower) to protest the island nation's plan to export low-level radioactive nuclear waste to the DPRK. They will also meet with Taiwan's main opposition lawmakers and environmentalists to seek joint countermeasures against the Taiwanese government's shipment plan. On Wednesday, six members of Green Korea, led by Professor Jang Won of Taejon University, started a sit-in hunger protest by shaving their heads in front of Taipower's headquarters in Taipei. A minor conflict ensued between the protesters and the Taipower staff who shouted slogans asking the ROK demonstrators to get out of Taiwan. (The Korea Times, "DELEGATION LEAVES FOR TAIWAN TODAY TO PROTEST NUKE WASTE SHIPMENT TO NK," Seoul, 01/31/97)

The state-run Taiwan Power Co. (Taipower) yesterday hinted at the possibility of canceling its plans to export nuclear waste to the DPRK if technical problems are found to exist. A Taipower representative stated at a press conference that the export deal to the DPRK could be canceled if the nation's Atomic Energy Technology Committee concludes that transportation of nuclear waste to the DPRK is inappropriate. Taiwan's new stance is worth noting as it was announced amidst calls by the US, the PRC and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) urging the nation to exercise caution regarding the nuclear waste export deal. The representative stated that, although several DPRK technicians were currently visiting Taiwan for inspections of harbor facilities and nuclear waste processing sites, the actual shipment date has not been finalized. (Joong-ang Ilbo, "TAIWAN COULD CANCEL PLANS TO EXPORT NUCLEAR WASTE TO NORTH KOREA," Seoul, 01/30/97)

According to a January 28 report by the United News of Taiwan, the Taiwanese Atomic Energy Technology Committee is skeptical about the proposed nuclear waste shipment to the DPRK next month. The report stated that the Taiwan Power Co. has yet to report their proposed shipment to the Atomic Energy Technology Committee. As a result, it will be at least three to four month before the

committee can finish their review on the matter for authorization. (Chosun Ilbo, "TAIWANESE ATOMIC ENERGY TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE DEEMS NUCLEAR WASTE SHIPMENT TO THE DPRK NEXT MONTH IMPOSSIBLE," Taipei, 01/30/97)

3. DPRK Resumes Canning Nuclear Fuel Rods

The DPRK has resumed canning used nuclear rods from its experimental reactor in Yongbyon, north of Pyongyang, and the operation will be completed in six to eight months unless the work is suspended again, Jiji Press reported Wednesday in a dispatch from Washington. Quoting a US State Department official, the Japanese news agency reported that once 8,000-plus spent nuclear rods are all sealed off and shipped to a third country, the DPRK will be unable to reprocess them to develop nuclear weapons, which will thus virtually resolve the DPRK nuclear issue. According the official, the canning operation began last April and about 4,200 spent nuclear rods have been canned so far. Pyongyang suspended canning the used nuclear rods last fall in response to delays in the light-water reactor project. Since the DPRK has recently resumed the operation, however, Washington plans to provide it with additional heavy oil aid within a few weeks. The framework agreement between the US and the DPRK is thus back on the right track and the US State Department has dispatched a group of experts to the DPRK to supervise the canning operation, the news service added. (The Korea Times, "NK RESUMES CANNING OF SPENT NUCLEAR RODS," Seoul, 01/31/97)

4. DPRK Light Water Reactor Project

The DPRK will establish a task force to facilitate construction of the two 1,000 megawatt light-water nuclear reactors in Sinpo. The overall project is expected to be headed by DPRK ambassador-at-large Ho Jong. The organization will be staffed by 30 people, mostly diplomats, to oversee the affairs concerning the nuclear reactors to be provided by the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO). A ROK government official stated that Stephen Bosworth, KEDO's executive director who visited Seoul earlier this week, relayed this latest development to the ROK government. The organization is expected to be the counterpart to the ROK Office of Planning of the Light Water Reactor Project under the Ministry of National Unification. Although the name and organization of the body is not known, DPRK diplomats often call it the "Office of the East Sea Nuclear Power Plant Project." Bosworth further stated that the DPRK plans to designate the Sinpo site as a "special zone," enjoying special tax and wage privileges similar to the Rajin-Sonbong Free Trade Zone. Two former DPRK diplomats to African countries, Li Myong-chol, former DPRK ambassador to Zimbabwe, and another who served as the ambassador to Namibia are possible candidates for heading development and operation of the special zone in Sinpo. (The Korea Herald, "NORTH KOREA TO SET UP UNIT FOR KEDO PROJECT," Seoul, 01/30/97)

5. US-DPRK Liaison Office

Kyodo Press, quoting a diplomatic source in Seoul, reported that the US has finalized its negotiations with the DPRK for a liaison office in Pyongyang and that the plans would be implemented as early as February. The report stated that the conclusion of the agreement was made possible because of the DPRK's agreement to accept US diplomatic pouches coming from the ROK's side of Panmunjom. The report also stated that the first US representative at the liaison office will be Evans Liviere, formerly of the US embassy in New Zealand. (Chosun Ilbo, "DPRK-US CONCLUDES FINAL AGREEMENTS TO SET UP PYONGYANG LIAISON OFFICE EARLY THIS YEAR," Tokyo, 01/30/97)

6. PRC Urges Korean Peninsula Peace

The PRC's official Xinhua press reported Thursday that President Jiang Zemin urged the two Koreas

to cooperate in achieving their fundamental objective reunifying the Korean peninsula. President Jiang announced his opinion in a meeting with the ROK National Assembly delegation and reassured them that the PRC would continue to aid in the peace process. (Chosun Ilbo, "PRC URGES PEACE TALKS BETWEEN THE TWO KOREAS," Beijing, 01/30/97)

7. Neutral Observers Committee Urges Korean Peninsula Peace

The official Xinhua press of the PRC reported yesterday that the Korean Peninsula Neutral Observers Committee resolved to achieve a peace treaty in the Korean peninsula at their meeting in Stockholm, Sweden. The meeting, the sixth of its kind since 1991, was held on January 28 with foreign ministry representatives from Poland, Switzerland, and Sweden. The committee members resolved that, despite the recent restrictions on its functions, it would work as a bridging institution between the two Koreas in resolving their differences and that it is ready to continue its current commitments during the upcoming peace negotiations between the two Koreas. The Neutral Observation Committee had been stripped of its original functions after it was removed from Panmunjom in 1993 following the DPRK's 1991 claim that it was ineffective in its duty. (Chosun Ilbo, "NEUTRAL OBSERVERS COMMITTEE RESOLVES TO KEEP PEACE IN THE KOREAN PENINSULA," Beijing, 01/30/97)

III. Japan

1. DPRK Light-Water Reactor Project

Yomiuri Shimbun ("KOREAN PENINSULA ENERGY DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION (KEDO) EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SAYS LIGHT WATER REACTOR (LWR) CONSTRUCTION WILL BEGIN IN SPRING," 3, 1/31/97) reported that KEDO Executive Director Steven Bosworth, who is now visiting Tokyo, revealed during his meeting with Japanese Parliamentary Vice Foreign Minister Masahiko Takamura on January 30 that he wants to see the LWR construction start this spring. [Ed. note: Please see the related item in the ROK section, above.]

2. Japan's New Self-Defense Ready Reserve Personnel

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("DEFENSE AGENCY SUBMITS TO DIET THREE BILLS RELATED TO INTRODUCTION OF SELF-DEFENSE READY RESERVE PERSONNEL," 2, 1/29/97) reported that Japan's Defense Agency on January 28 submitted three bills that are necessary for the introduction of the new system of Ready Reserve Personnel. The bills include a limitation of the number of Ground Self-Defense personnel to 178,700, recruitment of 700 ready reserve personnel by March 1998, and the deployment of the personnel in the 4th division of the Ground Self-Defense Force starting April 1998. The report added that the decision to introduce Ready Reserve Personnel accompanied the new Defense Guideline last year. The Ready Reserve Personnel are to be recruited from former self-defense personnel and are expected to play a key role in times of natural disaster and other emergencies.

3. Japan-DPRK Relations

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (LDP) POLITICIAN CONCERNED ABOUT MEETING DPRK LABOR PARTY HEAD," 3, 1/29/96) reported that Taku Yamazaki, Chairman of the Policy Research Council and the person in charge of the LDP's DPRK policy, is concerned about the meeting in Japan with DPRK Labor Party Secretary General Fang Chang Fa slated for January 30. The report pointed out that Yamazaki is worried about how to deal with the meeting because of the ROK's negative reaction to Japan's attitude toward Fang that was expressed in the Prime and Foreign Ministerial meetings held January 25. According to the report, Fang will visit Japan to

participate in a private company's symposium to be held February 7. The report also cited sources as stressing that there is nothing political about Fang's visit. But the report also suggested that Yamazaki is concerned about ROK President Kim Young-sam's demand that Japan remain in close contact with the ROK during the visit and that he believes that the ROK is worried that Fang may ask Japan for food aid.

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("DPRK LABOR PARTY SECRETARY GENERAL ARRIVES IN JAPAN," 3, 1/31/97) reported that a DPRK delegation led by Labor Party Secretary General Fang Chang Fa arrived in Japan on January 30. Fang last visited Japan five years ago and this is his third visit. The purpose of his visit is allegedly to participate in an academic seminar between February 7-9 but the report pointed out that he probably will request that Japan restart negotiations on Japan-DPRK diplomatic normalization and the resumption of food aid.

4. Japan-US Defense Relations

US Deputy Assistant Secretary Kurt Campbell told the Asahi Shimbun ("US DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE EXPECTS EARLY SETTLEMENT ON FUTENMA ISSUE," 1/29/97) during a January 27 interview that the offshore Camp Schwab heliport is only one of a few potential heliport sites and that he is paying attention to the quality of the alternative heliport site rather than whether the site will be selected. He added that he is expecting the Japanese government to review the site from political and technical viewpoints. With regard to the US-led Theater Missile Defense Initiative (TMD), he stated that he values Japan's decision to participate in the initiative but that the new US Secretary of Defense William Cohen is eager to promote a ballistic missile defense system (BMD). He added that the initiative will progress very quickly and that he expects Japan to participate in the initiative. With regard to the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), he stated that, despite the wrong view that the QDR may lead to reduction of US Marines in Okinawa, there will not be a major change in total Japan-US military manpower. Furthermore, with regard to the review of Japan-US Defense Guidelines, he said that all operations can be done within the framework of the present interpretation of the Japanese constitution and within Japan-US agreements, while keeping in mind Japan's sensitive domestic situation. (See also the Japan Report 1-23-97 for QDR)

5. DPRK To Participate In Swiss Economic Forum

A Kyodo News Agency report carried in the Nikkei Shimbun ("DPRK TO PARTICIPATE IN ECONOMIC FORUM THIS YEAR," Geneva, 2, 1/28/97) reported that the DPRK's representative in Geneva revealed that the DPRK will participate two years in a row in the World Economic Forum to be held in Davos, Switzerland on January 30. The DPRK will send a representative team led by Kim Jong-uh, the head of the DPRK's Committee on Foreign Economic Cooperation Promotion.

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