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I. United States

1. US Reaction to Kim Dae-jung's Inauguration

State Department Spokesman James Rubin ("STATE DEPARTMENT NOON BRIEFING," USIA Transcript, 02/25/98) stated that the US government congratulated Kim Dae-jung on his inauguration as the ROK's new president. Rubin stated, "President Kim has many friends here, and we look forward to working closely and cooperatively with him in the future." He added that the US supports "meaningful dialogue between North and South Korea," including the implementation of the specifics of the 1991 basic agreement.

The Associated Press (George Gedda, "U.S. WANTS NORTH-SOUTH KOREA TALKS," Washington, 02/25/98) reported that Jonathan Pollack, an East Asia expert at the Rand Corporation, said that Kim Dae-jung's accession to the ROK presidency augurs well for US friendship with the ROK. Pollack stated that US ties with President Kim Young-sam were strained by his reluctance to engage the DPRK, and he described Kim Dae-jung as "the preferred choice" of most senior US officials.

2. DPRK Defectors

The Associated Press (4 NORTH KOREANS DEFECT TO THE SOUTH," Seoul, 02/26/98) reported that the ROK Agency for National Security Planning said that Park Jong-shik, a DPRK mine worker, and three DPRK women defected to the ROK on Thursday. The four sought asylum after entering the ROK illegally through an unnamed third county.

3. US MIAs

United Press International ("AIR FORCE SEARCHING FOR FAMILIES," Washington, 02/26/98) reported that the US Air Force announced that the families of some 900 Air Force pilots and crew members unaccounted for from the Korean War can now register with a special office established at Randolph Air Force Base. The Clinton administration recently concluded an agreement with the DPRK government to allow US officials to search for the bodies of missing US military personnel this year. The US will pay the DPRK US\$672,000 for the expense of conducting this year's searches.

4. Confirmation of ROK Prime Minister

The Associated Press ("S. KOREAN PRESIDENT SEEKS MEETING," Seoul, 02/26/98) reported that ROK President Kim Dae-jung on Thursday proposed that opposition leaders meet with him to break an impasse over his appointment of Kim Jong-pil as prime minister. Both opposition parties agreed to see Kim in two separate meetings Friday, but the majority Grand National Party reiterated that it cannot support the nomination.

5. Russian Nuclear Safety

US Department of Energy ("U.S., RUSSIA UPGRADE SECURITY AT RUSSIAN NUCLEAR FACILITIES," USIA Text, 02/25/98) announced Wednesday that the US and the Russian Federation have completed upgrades at four Russian facilities to help to secure and control nuclear materials, reducing the worldwide risk of nuclear proliferation. The sites are the latest facilities to complete the installation of nuclear materials protection, control and accounting upgrades under the US Department of Energy's cooperative efforts with Russia, the Newly Independent States, and the Baltics. US Secretary of Energy Federico Pena stated, "Our joint efforts to institute site-wide material protection, control, and accounting upgrades continue to reduce the nuclear danger worldwide. These upgrades significantly reduce the risk of unauthorized use, theft, or diversion of weapons-usable nuclear materials."

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.

Produced by the Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development.

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