

CHRONOLOGY

Major Events Around the Korean Peninsula (February 25, 2003 - May 24, 2003)

February

- 25 The inauguration ceremony of 16th President Roh Moo-hyun is held at the National Assembly.

Japan's Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and new SK President Roh hold their first summit.

Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda announces that NK's launch of a short-range missile does not violate the Pyongyang Declaration between Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and NK leader Kim Jong-il. NK had test-launched a short-range missile into the East Sea between Korea and Japan the day before.

Minju Josen, newspaper of the NK Cabinet, calls on the US to stop joint military exercises with SK called "Reception, Staging, Onward Movement, and Integration of Strategic Deployment Forces," and "Fool Eagle," denouncing them preparations for attacking NK.

US Secretary of State Colin Powell announces that the US government will provide an initial donation of 40,000 metric tons of agricultural commodities and is prepared to contribute as much as 60,000 metric tons more of such aid to NK in response

to the WFP appeal for 2003 emergency food aid operations.

- 26 KCNA denounces the US RC-135 strategic reconnaissance plane that intruded its territory, warning that it will take stern self-defense measures.

NK has restarted a nuclear reactor it had mothballed as part of a 1994 pact with the US, the *Associated Press* reports.

- 27 US and SK military officials discuss plans to reconfigure or cut the US military presence in SK.

March

- 1 A financial delegation from *Chongryun*, or *Chosen Soren* as it is called in Japan, visits in Pyongyang.

- 2 An inter-Korean meeting for peace and reunification to mark the 84th anniversary of the March 1 Independence Movement closes in Seoul after a two-day run. A 105-member NK delegation participates.

Four NK MiGs intercept an Air Force reconnaissance plane 150 miles from their coastline. One uses its radar to identify the plane as a target, but there was no hostile fire.

- 3 Hyundai Asan announces that overland road tours to NK Mt. Kumgang will not be held during March.
- KCNA claims in a commentary that the NK missiles will in no way be a threat to foreign countries, and that production and deployment of missiles is aimed at strengthening defensive capabilities.
- US President George W. Bush, in an interview with US newspapers, mentions the possibility of using military force against NK, saying "If they don't work diplomatically, they'll have to work militarily."
- 4 US and SK begin large-scale joint military exercises, "Foil Eagle." A total of 5,000 US soldiers from the US and the Pacific region participate in the drill.
- 5 SK and NK end their three-day second meeting to provide a practical plan for the construction of facilities on Mt. Kumgang where separated Korean family members and other relatives will meet regularly. No agreement resulted.
- SK Unification Minister Jeong Sehyun dismisses the possibility of a US military strike on NK's suspected nuclear site. His remarks were made after US defense officials responded to NK's interception by announcing they were sending a dozen B-52 bombers and a dozen B-1 bombers to the western Pacific.
- 6 US Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld states that he wants US troops stationed near the DMZ to be shifted further south of the border, moved to other countries in the region or brought home.
- US Senate unanimously approves the Moscow Treaty (Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty).
- US Senator Richard Lugar, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, calls on the Bush administration to resume bilateral dialogue with NK in order to manage the potential for miscalculation that could lead to a deadly incident or broader conflict.
- 7 SK Defense Minister Cho Young-kil, during a parliamentary hearing, testifies that NK's Feb. 24 missile test-fire with an estimated range of up to 160 kilometers failed to hit its target. He explains the test was conducted earlier than the usual March-November test period because of the current situation.
- SK Defense Minister urges the US not to withdraw its troops from the DMZ until the current nuclear crisis is over.
- 8 The first shipment by the European Union, of food aid for NK arrives at Nampho in line with the EU's decision last December to provide the North with about 70,000 tons of food in aid through the WFP.
- 9 The North's Asia-Pacific Peace Committee issues a detailed report regarding SK's Hyundai Merchant Marine's secret payments to NK, saying that the South Korean company had benefited much from NK.
- 10 NK test-fires its second short-range missile into the East Sea. The missile is the same type as was test-fired on Feb. 24.
- 11 *Choson Sinbo*, an organ of *Chongryun*, says that NK recently

reorganized three counties in Kaesong city under the direct control of the central government into two counties.

Chung Mong-hun, chairman of SK's Hyundai Asan Co., visits Pyongyang.

Mehr Khan, director of the UNICEF East Asia and Pacific regional office, leaves Pyongyang, winding up an eight-day visit to NK that began Mar. 4.

SK and NK agree to resume work on the inter-Korean railway inside the DMZ in late March.

- 12 KCNA announces that the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula should not be solved through multilateral talks, but that NK and the US could quite possibly find a solution in a sincere face-to-face discussion.

- 13 An annual meeting of the NK-Cuba solidarity committee is held in Pyongyang.

- 14 SK President Roh Moo-hyun agrees to a law authorizing a special prosecutor to investigate whether several hundred million dollars were paid to NK to induce leader Kim Jong-il to hold a summit meeting in June 2000 with then President Kim Dae-jung.

The North's Asia-Pacific Peace Committee spokesman issues a statement claiming the South's opposition Grand National Party sent a secret envoy to Pyongyang and Beijing to garner NK support for its presidential bid last year.

US navy aircraft carrier Carl Vinson and six US F-117 stealth fighters arrive at Gunsan Air Base to attend SK-US RSOI (Reception, Staging,

Onward Movement and Integration) war games slated for March 19-26.

- 15 Hu Jintao succeeds Jiang Zemin as President at the 16th National People's Congress in Beijing. Jiang was re-elected to a five-year term as chairman of the state Military Affairs Commission.

- 16 *Rodong Sinmun* stresses that SK's probe of the payoff scandal involving SK's Hyundai Asan Co. and NK will do harm to relations between the two Koreas.

WHO issues an emergency global alert warning that a mysterious, sometimes fatal pneumonia-like illness posed a worldwide threat after spreading from Asia to Europe and North America. More than 400 people have been sickened by the disease since the respiratory illness surfaced in China, including at least 150 new cases in the last week alone. The illness, which originated in Guangdong Province, has sickened about 300 people in China, killing five.

- 17 NK criticizes Secretary of State Colin L. Powell's statement, which designated the North as a special concerned country for suppressing citizens' religious activities.

- 18 Maurice Strong, special envoy of UN Secretary-General Kofi Anan, arrives in Pyongyang for consultations with senior officials on food aid to the North.

SK Cabinet agrees to ask the National Assembly to approve a plan to send an engineering battalion of 500-600 soldiers.

- 19 US Department of Defense announces that the US expects to

offer a plan within months to relocate a military base from Seoul as part of a realignment of US forces in SK that could include the possible removal of US troops from the country.

- 20 US launches war against Iraq.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman states that the US decision to use force without UN approval is a breach of international law, and that most countries favored continued weapons inspections and a peaceful solution to the crisis.

SK elevates its military Watch Condition to a level 2 for the first time since 1996 with the rising concern that NK could use the distraction of war in Iraq to raise tensions on the Korean peninsula. the *Yonhap News Agency* reports.

- 21 A NK Foreign Ministry spokesman labels the US-led attacks on Iraq as a severe violation of the sovereignty of Iraq.

- 25 SK National Assembly, fearing a public backlash, shelve a vote on sending troops to support US-led war on Iraq.

- 26 NK withdraws from the only regular military contact with the US-led UN Command, accusing the US of trying to attack NK.

SK Foreign Minister Yoon Young-kwan visits US.

SK President Roh Moo-hyun appoints a human rights lawyer, Ko Young-koo, as the director of the National Intelligence Service as a part of a reform drive.

The sixth session of the 10th-term SPA is held in Pyongyang to approve the budget bill for fiscal 2003, which calls for a 13.6 percent increase in revenues over last year and a 14.4 percent boost in expenditures, while endorsing the earlier adoption of five laws by the SPA Presidium.

- 27 The NK Cabinet announces in a bulletin that it will issue three kinds of government bonds, which will mature in ten years.

- 28 Japan launches the H-IIA rocket carrying its first spy satellites at the Tanegashima Space Center.

- 31 US State Department releases annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. NK is cited for continued extrajudicial killings and disappearances, and for the trafficking of women and young girls, who are among the refugees and workers crossing the Chinese border.

April

- 2 *Choson Sinbo* says that NK has approved, as of last month, the trade of various industrial products at what are known as farmers' markets. NK in the past permitted only surplus agricultural products to be distributed at farmers' markets.

SK National Assembly approves a government proposal to send 700 non-combatant troops to support the US-led war on Iraq.

WHO warns travelers to stay away from Hong Kong and China's Guangdong Province because an epidemic of a dangerous new lung infection, known as SARS, is still spreading mysteriously there. It was the first time in its 55-year history that the UN body has cautioned peo-

- ple not to travel to a specific location because of a disease.
US military announces that F-117 stealth bombers and F-15E fighter jets brought to SK for joint war games will remain there as a deterrent against NK.
- 3 NK leader Kim Jong-il inspects Kim Hyong-jik Military Medical University in Pyongyang, his first reported appearance since Feb. 12.
- SK Unification Ministry announces that a total of 270 NK asylum seekers have defected to SK between Jan. and Mar. of this year, a 26 percent increase from the same period last year.
- 4 In a telephone conversation between President Roh Moo-hyun and US President George W. Bush, they agree to work closely to address the NK nuclear issue through diplomacy. Bush thanks Roh for the dispatch of SK non-combat troops to support the coalition war in Iraq.
- KCNA denounces the US imposition on Mar. 24 of economic sanctions on NK in connection with the North's alleged missile export to Pakistan, calling it "a ridiculous and unjustifiable action."
- 5 KCNA says in a commentary that NK will disapprove of, and nullify any documents and resolutions on the North to be adopted in the United Nations Security Council meeting, slated for April 9.
- 6 The Secretariat of the Committee for the Peace and Reunification of the Fatherland criticizes the SK National Assembly's recommendation that the SK government should consider imposing economic sanctions on the North to solve the North's nuclear issue as a "plain provocation against NK."
- 8 US offers Japan to join Britain and Australia in sending officials to act as foreign advisers in a US-led interim authority in postwar Iraq.
- 9 KCNA warns Japan to remember it was "within striking distance" of NK amid heightened calls in Japan to contain the NK regime.
- Richard Lawless, US deputy assistant secretary of defense for East Asia, and SK's assistant defense minister for policy, Cha Young-koo agree in principle that the US military is to move its main base in SK from Seoul to a new location inside the country as part of its global redeployment of forces. They stress that the redeployment of troops from the Yongsan garrison will not affect their ability to deter NK.
- 10 Facing stiff Chinese and Russian opposition, the UN Security Council fails to reach agreement on a common approach to confronting NK for its nuclear plan.
- 11 SK launches a stealth warship capable of spying electronically on NK.
- KCBS denounces the US for the publication of the 2002 Annual Report for Human Rights, which designated NK along with China, Israel, Palestine and Myanmar, as suppressing citizens' human rights.
- 13 US President Bush, at a press conference, states that US is making progress in dealing with NK's nuclear crisis and has made it clear that the best way to handle the problem is in a multilateral framework.

- 14 A national ceremony is held in Pyongyang to mark the 91st anniversary of the late NK leader Kim Il-sung's birth.
- KCNA says that the DPRK will send five abducted Japanese citizens back to Japan if they wish to go, while renewing its call on Japan to send other abductees, who have remained in Japan since mid-October last year.
- 15 SK President Roh Moo-hyun states that the dispatch of noncombat troops to Iraq should be expedited now that the war is ending, and since troops there will be mostly engaged in humanitarian and rebuilding projects.
- The WHO announces that its team of experts is being denied access to Beijing military hospitals where unconfirmed reports say a large number of patients with SARS are being treated.
- 16 *Minju Joson* reiterates that NK will accept multilateral talks proposed by the US to hammer out the North's nuclear weapons issue, if the US changes its hostile policy against it.
- The SK government announces that it will abstain from a sensitive UN vote against NK human rights violations. The 53-member UN Human Rights Commission is to vote on a US-backed European Union resolution condemning NK for the first time, in Geneva on Apr. 23.
- 17 NK Red Cross Society sends a message to SK Red Cross asking for rice and fertilizer aid, breaking a month-long freeze in official inter-Korean contacts.
- 19 While various SK NGOs are embark-
- ing on relief operation in Iraq, the first group, Korea Food for the Hungry International, sends a first 15-member medical team.
- 21 Chinese health officials concede they have mismanaged the outbreak of SARS, and raises the number of confirmed SARS cases in the capital from 37 to 346.
- Jo Myong-rok meets in Beijing with Chinese Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan and Guo Boxiong, vice chairman of the Central Military Commission.
- KCNA issues a revised version of an official statement which had originally indicated NK was reprocessing spent nuclear fuel rods. The new English report reads "successfully moving toward reprocessing" the rods, stopping short of saying actual reprocessing has begun.
- 23 Representatives of the US, China, and NK hold multilateral talks in Beijing on NK's nuclear weapons program for three-day run. During the plenary session, NK representative Ri Gun states that NK has reprocessed all 8,000 spent nuclear fuel rods in its possession.
- SK Defense ministry announces that 10 NK MiG-21s and MiG-23s launched long-distance navigation flight training on 20-21 over the East Sea, an unusual move because the country's energy crisis had sharply limited such flights in the past.
- WHO adds Toronto, Beijing and Shanxi Province to Hong Kong and Guangdong Province in its travel destination alert.
- 25 A group of senior officials of the

Workers' Party, government and the People's Army visit the Patriotic Martyrs' Cemetery in Pyongyang on the occasion of the 71st founding anniversary of the army. The cadres included Kim Yong-nam, chairman of the Presidium of the SPA, four secretaries of the Workers' Party Central Committee, Jon Byong-ho, Kye Ung-thae, Jong Ha-chol and Kim Jung-rin; SPA Chairman Choe Thae-bok; Kim Chol-man, member of the National Defense Commission; three vice marshals: Kim Ik-hyon, Kim Ryong-yon, and Ri Jong-san and Vice Premier Kwak Bom-gi.

US-China-North Korea Multilateral talks ends after NK claims to have nuclear weapons and may test, export or use them.

- 26 Six US Marine helicopters and a refueling aircraft land at a civilian airport on Miyakojima Island, Okinawa Prefecture, Japan, despite requests by the prefectural government that they refrain from landing at the facility.
- 27 During 10th inter-Korean ministerial talks, NK rejects SK's call for NK to clarify the statement that it has nuclear weapons at the talks. NK instead calls for national unity against US pressure.
- 30 The 10th round of inter-Korean ministerial-level talks closes in Pyongyang, one day behind schedule, with the announcement of a six-point joint statement.

May

- 1 NK and Britain hold its first ministerial-level talks as NK embassy opens in London.
- 2 The SK government decides to send

200,000 tons of fertilizer in aid to NK, in response to Pyongyang's appeal to Seoul for the supply of fertilizer during the 10th round of inter-Korean ministerial-level talks held in Pyongyang during Apr. 27-30.

- 4 Japan and Russia agree to start cleaning up 41 retired Russian nuclear submarines in the Russian Far East this summer.

NK leader Kim Jong-il sends a condolence message to Chinese President Hu Jintao and Jiang Zemin, chairman of the Central Military Commission, concerning a recent submarine accident that killed all 70 sailors aboard.

- 5 A NK foreign ministry spokesman says that the NK government has no connections with a drug smuggling operation involving the Bongsu, a NK cargo ship seized by the Australian Navy on April 20 off the port of New Castle, in southeast Australia.

Rodong Sinmun, newspaper of the Workers' Party, says in an editorial that the US should change boldly its policy toward NK, handling sincerely the "new and bold" proposal suggested by the North during three-way talks held in Beijing during April 23-25.

- 6 KCNA announces that "people's lives bonds" went on sale May 1 and that bonds worth millions of won were sold throughout NK the next day.
- 8 A SK official states that the US has given SK a satellite photograph showing smoke coming from a NK nuclear facility, a possible sign NK has started reprocessing spent fuel rods.

- Japanese police search offices of a firm run by *Chongryun*, after it apparently tried for the second time in six months to skirt the law against exporting electronic devices that could be used to develop nuclear weapons.
- 11 The Russian State Duma ratifies the Russian-US Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reduction.
- SK President Roh Moo-hyun visits Washington.
- 12 KCNA announces that the first round of inoculations against paratyphoid this year is under way throughout the North.
- 13 A ceremony is held in Pyongyang to open a "Week for Friendship" between NK and Iran. On April 15, both country celebrate 30th anniversary of the opening of diplomatic ties.
- Various functions, including an archaeological relics and folk artifacts exhibition and scientific symposium, are held in Pyongyang to commemorate the 2300th birth anniversary of King Tongmyong, founder of the Koguryo Dynasty (277 BC-668 AD).
- 14 US President George W. Bush and SK President Roh Moo-hyun hold a summit meeting at the White House.
- 15 Japan's main ruling and opposition parties pass the three war contingency bills that give the nation its first legal framework for responding to military attack since World War II.
- President Bush reaffirms the US commitment to a "robust forward presence" on the Korean peninsula and pledged in a joint statement to work with President Roh on redistributing US troops within the country.
- 16 NK Foreign Minister Paek Nam-sun meets in Pyongyang with Swiss Foreign Minister Micheline Calmy-Rey.
- Japan's Cabinet Office releases a report that Japan recorded zero economic growth in the first three months of 2003.
- 17 A NK foreign ministry spokesman issues a statement denouncing three bills passed by the Japanese Diet on May 15 as moves that intensify the dangerous situation on the Korean peninsula.
- 19 KCNA says that Canada recently decided to donate food worth US\$2.5 million to NK.
- The Nuclear Suppliers Group opens a week-long meeting in Busan with NK on its agenda.
- 20 A lawsuit seeking compensation for Chinese victims of germ warfare committed by Unit 731 was heard for the first time in Japan's Tokyo Higher Court.
- Swiss Foreign Minister Micheline Calmy-Rey visits Seoul via the truce village of Panmunjom, ending her visit to Pyongyang.
- The Ministry of Power and Coal Industries signs in Pyongyang a memorandum of understanding on a project for a power transmission grid with the Swiss ABB group.
- 21 Inter-Korean talks in Pyongyang suspends after NK's warning that SK

faced “unspeakable disaster” if it sided with the US in the nuclear crisis.

- 22 *Choson Sinbo* says that a memorandum of understanding on exterminating insects in cabbage crops was recently signed by the governments of NK and Australia.

Chongryun issues a statement denouncing several NK defectors’ testimony that NK had shipped missile parts on a cargo ship, Mangyongbong, from Japan to the North, during a “US Senate Subcommittee Hearing on Drugs, Counterfeiting, and Weapons Proliferation: The NK Connection” held in Washington on May 20. The statement claims the testimony was a “total fabrication.”

- 23 The fifth meeting of the inter-Korean Economic Cooperation Promotion

Committee closes in Pyongyang, after adopting a seven-point agreement. SK agrees to give NK 400,000 tons of rice, and both agree to reconnect inter-Korean railway in mid-June inside the DMZ.

US President Bush and visiting Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi vow that they will not tolerate nuclear weapons in NK, at Bush’s Texas ranch.

- 24 A NK foreign ministry spokesman indicates that NK will take part in five-way talks as demanded by the US, if Washington responds to bilateral talks with NK to solve the North’s nuclear weapons issue.

KCNA comments that the US should talk with NK on an equal and fair basis to settle the nuclear issue, while giving up its hostile policy against the North.

ABBREVIATIONS

SK	South Korea	Chongryun	pro-Pyongyang General
NK	North Korea		Association of Korean
KCBS	(North) Korean Central		Residents
	Broadcasting Station	SARS	severe acute respiratory
KCNA	(North) Korean Central		syndrome
	News Agency	WHO	World Health Organization
SPA	Supreme People’s	WFP	World Food Programme
	Assembly	DMZ	demilitarized zone
UNICEF	UN Children’s Fund		