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United States Department of State
Bureau of Intelligence and Research

The Secretary's Morning Intelligence Summary

April 29, 1994

Dept. of State, RPS/IPS, Margaret P. Ginfeld, Dir
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DPRK: New Arrangements

The foreign ministry yesterday issued a statement charging the United States had "completely scrapped" the 1953 Korean Armistice Agreement and proposing a "new peace arrangement" with the United States, according to DPRK press reports. The North also announced it was withdrawing its personnel from the Military Armistice Commission (MAC) and ordering the Polish representatives involved in the armistice machinery to leave, according to Embassy Seoul.

Pyongyang said it would maintain a liaison channel at Panmunjom until new arrangements were made; it promised not to alter the disposition of its forces in the demilitarized zone or take any action that would provoke an incident. The North left deliberately vague whether it had dismantled only the MAC or was declaring the armistice itself null and void.

Comment: Doing away with the armistice has long been one of Pyongyang's central goals -- one it has pursued more diligently since the 1991 appointment of an ROK general as the UN Command's senior MAC member. Since then it has worked to dismantle the armistice machinery piece by piece. There was a brief interlude after the first round of US-DPRK talks in June had created what the North termed a "new reality." Last autumn, however, it again began pushing, and planning, to move toward a follow-on agreement.

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tough foreign ministry statement in late March emphasized that the deployment of Patriots showed the United States had essentially discarded the armistice. Pyongyang may have believed it had to follow through to maintain its credibility. The move also has implications for the leadership succession: Kim Jong Il is the North's "supreme commander" and will be seen as directing any military negotiations.

The armistice move, like the NPT-withdrawal announcement, creates a new, potentially destabilizing, situation that Pyongyang probably calculates will force the United States to deal with it more seriously. The decision also suggests debate over policy toward the United States and the South is heating up

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For a long time, the North's preference was to replace the armistice with a US-DPRK peace agreement, cutting the South out altogether. As the North developed a more realistic approach toward the South in the late 1980s, it began to signal it was prepared to include the ROK in follow-on arrangements; recently it even floated trial balloons about a US-ROK-DPRK tripartite military commission. Yesterday's foreign ministry statement was in line with this approach, calling for a new "peace arrangement" rather than just for a "peace treaty" with the United States – a formulation leaving open the possibility of eventually including Seoul.

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