

R15B

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DECL: After Korean Unification

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North Korea's Food Situation

BACKGROUND:

The food shortage in the DPRK will worsen this winter; the North needs about 5.9 million tons of grain over the next twelve months, but will harvest no more than 4 million tons. Thus, there clearly will be a continued need for food assistance in the coming months. Although such assistance could be provided on a humanitarian basis, we need to discuss in these meetings the political ramifications of such assistance. We should also reconfirm consensus that the ROK will take the lead on large-scale food assistance. We reserve the right to respond on a bilateral basis to an international call for food aid.

TALKING POINTS:

- o The DPRK's minimum need for grain over the next twelve months is 5.9 million metric tons (4.5 million for human consumption, 1.2 million for livestock, and 200,000 for seed).
- o The 1996 harvest, however, will yield only about 4 million metric tons of rice and corn. This total could be reduced even more by such factors as poor weather, malnourished and weak farmers unable to harvest efficiently, and fuel shortages that limit the use of machines.
- o Moreover, this shortage is nationwide, and not confined to regional "pockets," as in the past. Civilians are dying of starvation, and even many military troops are malnourished.
- o Our policy remains unchanged: we have no current plans to offer additional food assistance to the DPRK. However, if there were an international call for food assistance, we would review such a request on its merits.
- o We are aware that there are political ramifications to any decision to either provide or withhold food assistance to the North Koreans. We intend to consult closely with your two countries on this issue, particularly if circumstances in the DPRK worsen in the coming months.

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