

Albright arrives in N. Korean capital for historic visit

by Robin Wright
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October 23, 2000

PYONGYANG, North Korea - In a historic visit by the first ranking American official ever to come to North Korea, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright arrived in Pyongyang Monday morning for talks aimed at improving relations between the United States and the North and addressing some of the biggest global challenges facing Washington.

Albright was greeted by Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gae Gwan in a low-key ceremony at the airport here. She then headed to the former palace of the late "Great Leader" Kim Il Sung, which has been turned into a museum and mausoleum and where Vice Marshal Cho Myong Nok, the No. 2 man to current leader Kim Jong Il, was to meet her. Earlier this month, Cho visited President Clinton at the White House.

Albright's three-day visit to the Korean peninsula, which is scheduled to include a stopover in Seoul on Wednesday, follows a whirlwind round of diplomacy in recent weeks that has stunned U.S. policy-makers, including many who have tried to chip away diplomatically at this isolated Communist nation and its quirky political dynasty for years.

The initial progress and rapid pace of negotiations are likely to pave the

way for a trip to Pyongyang, North Korea's capital, by Clinton next month, an event considered wildly improbable just a couple of months ago. At a time when the administration faces a multitude of foreign policy challenges, North Korea could even prove to be its most notable final success, experts say.

"This visit may be the most important trip of Albright's tenure," said Joseph Cirincione, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington. "This small impoverished nation holds the key to solving several vexing global challenges facing the United States."

At the top of the agenda are weapons of mass destruction, particularly North Korea's advanced missile program; terrorism; and defusing tension on the world's most heavily fortified border, between North and South Korea, which has been a source of instability and sporadic crises in East Asia since the 1950-53 Korean War. About 33,000 Americans died in that war, and 37,000 are based in the South.

U.S. officials are trying to downplay expectations of a big breakthrough during the visit. Albright has come "to listen, to discuss the range of ideas that would meet our fundamental concerns," a senior U.S. official told reporters traveling on her plane.

But the momentum has clearly ac-

celerated since a June visit to North Korea by South Korean President Kim Dae Jung opened the way for rapprochement with the outside world. Just days before Albright's visit, Britain and Germany both announced that they would renew diplomatic relations with Pyongyang, and Spain and Belgium are expected to follow soon.

The European Union also promised aid, including a \$17 million package to develop agriculture, and pledged to work toward closer economic and political ties. And Japan is scheduled to hold its own talks with North Korean officials in Beijing next week.

The foundation for Albright's trip was laid during the visit to Washington by Cho. After those talks, North Korea renounced all forms of terrorism and the two former enemies declared their intention to "formally end the Korean War" by eventually converting an armistice into a permanent treaty.

The two governments now may also be close to an agreement that would remove North Korea from the State Department's Terrorism List, which by law requires sanctions that bar any sales or exports to targeted nations except of humanitarian goods.

North Korea was last involved in a major terrorist attack in 1987, U.S. officials say, when it masterminded the downing of a South Korean passenger plane near Myanmar that killed all 115 people on board.

The most critical and complex issue for Washington and its allies, however, is North Korea's missile program.

Pyongyang's medium-range ballistic missile capabilities have been the leading motive for the United States to consider developing a national missile defense at a cost of billions of dollars. The threat was underscored when North Korea fired a missile over Japan in 1998.

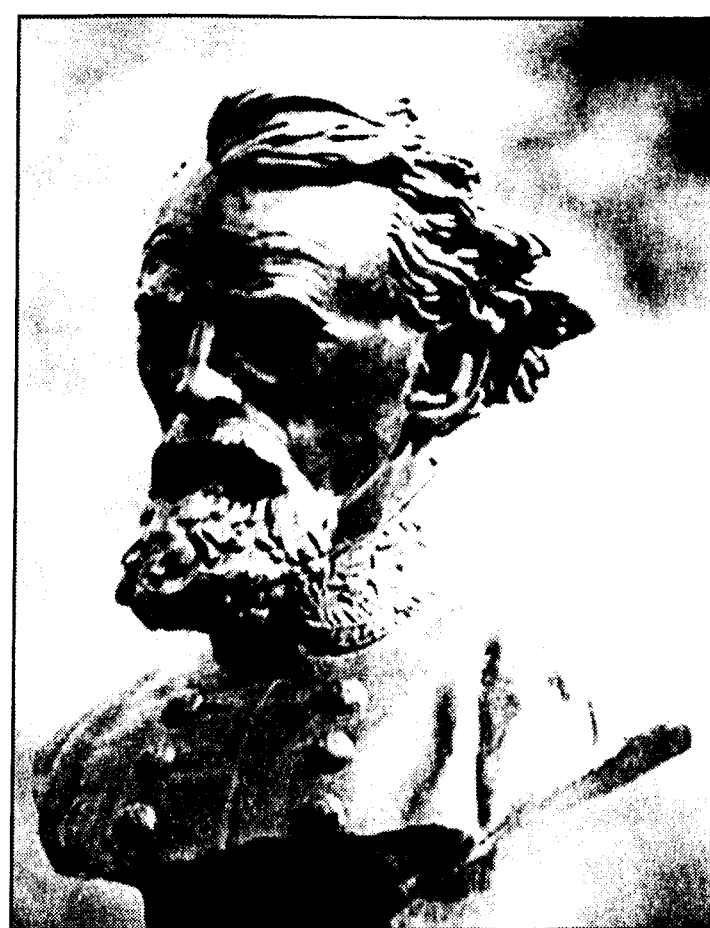
One of the world's last Communist states is also a major source of missiles and missile technology. Except for the world's five nuclear powers, only six countries have medium-range ballistic missiles. North Korea is a major supplier to two of them - Pakistan and Iran.

So far, North Korea has agreed only to a moratorium on flight testing of long-range missiles, which doesn't affect development.

"They can't test, which degrades their ability to deploy," the senior official aboard Albright's plane said.

Even if major progress is made, U.S. officials caution that much work remains to be done on other issues, including human rights and Pyongyang's conventional weapons and military deployment. North Korea has 4,000 long-range artillery pieces aimed at and within range of Seoul and hundreds of thousands of troops within a few miles of the border between the two Koreas.

In Black & White...



Mayor James Perkins Jr. had to stand face to face with Selma's openly racist ways when the bust of Nathan Bedford Forrest, a Confederate general and the first grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, was unveiled on city property in a black neighborhood.



'Killed in Action': Is gender an issue?

by Thomas E. Ricks
and Steve Vogel
The Washington Post
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WASHINGTON - In the tense hours after the bombing of the USS Cole on Oct. 12, Chris Ferretti was among the spouses who waited anxiously at Norfolk Naval Station for news about their loved ones aboard the crippled ship in faraway Yemen.

But unlike most of the others, Chris Ferretti is a man. When his wife, Petty Officer 2nd Class Loretta Lynn Taylor Ferretti, finally was able to call, she told him that she had been very lucky. Shortly before the blast, she decided to skip lunch in favor of a nap. She was asleep when the explosion hit the ship's mess.

The attack on the Cole, which appears to have been the first major terrorist attack on a U.S. warship, also marked another milestone: It was the first time that women permanently assigned to a Navy combatant ship have died in an attack on that ship, according to Lt. Jane Alexander, a Navy spokeswoman. She chose those words carefully because the Navy is not sure whether a female nurse ever was killed while serving temporarily on a warship.

Two of the 17 sailors who died aboard the Cole were women - Lakeina M. Francis, 19, of Woodleaf, N.C., and Lakiba Nicole Palmer, 22,

of San Diego - a fact the country appears to have taken pretty much in stride. "Whether they're male or female doesn't matter," said Rear Adm. John Foley, commander of naval surface forces for the U.S. Atlantic Fleet.

"The focus has been on all Cole sailors."

"The story is that there is no story," said another senior Navy officer. "The media didn't say, 'Holy mackerel.'"

Academic experts on the military also have noted the lack of controversy. "I have to admit to being surprised that there was no media coverage related to the fact that women died aboard the Cole," said Juanita Firestone, a military sociologist at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

But there is sharp disagreement among the experts about what this means.

One school says the large, and growing, role of women in the military is now widely accepted.

"I think the American public has gotten used to women being killed in the line of duty, not only in the military, but as police officers," said

Mady Wechsler Segal, a sociologist at the University of Maryland.

Adds retired Navy Capt. Georgia Sadler. "The public understands that people who serve in the military can

be killed, regardless of their gender. Thus, the public is taking the deaths of women in stride, and, rightfully, mourning for all the casualties of the

Cole as sailors and heroes."

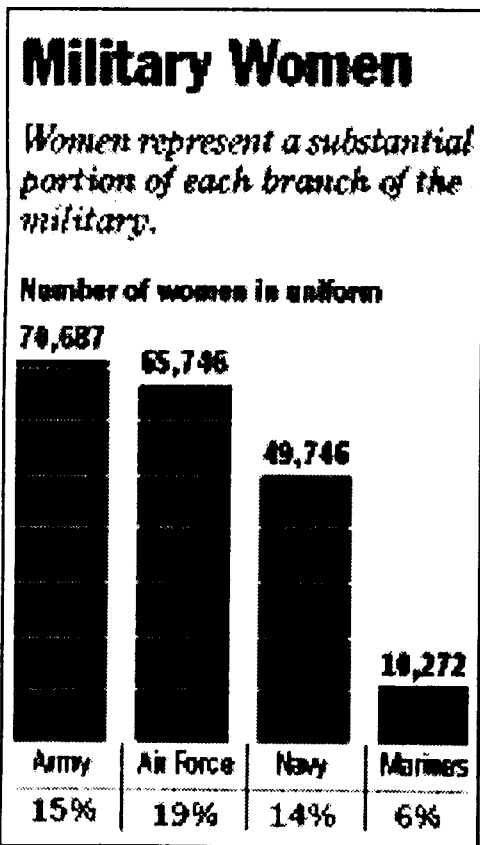
The other, more conservative view is that the American people's tolerance for the deaths of female soldiers and sailors has not been put to a full test.

"I suspect this is not yet the crossroads," said Cap Parlier, a retired Marine Corps test pilot. In the Cole bombing, he noted, "the public never saw bodies, just a big hole in the side of the ship, a number of flag-draped caskets, some names and portrait photographs." He said he believes that the public will react vigorously when it someday sees photographs of "the semi-nude body of a female pilot being dragged through the streets of some Third World country."

Both schools agree that the 1991 Persian Gulf War was a watershed. Before that, most women in combat theaters were nurses.

During World War I, according to the Defense Department, no military women died in action, but 102 were felled by influenza and injury. During World War II, 16 nurses were killed in action, 14 died in aircraft crashes and other accidents, and 312 were killed by disease. Fifteen nurses died in Korea, and 10 in Vietnam.

But the Gulf War was the first time that American women went to war in large numbers as combatants. Some 37,000 were sent to the Gulf region, making up 7 percent of total U.S.



7 missing after flash floods in Arizona

by Tom Gorman
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Authorities in western Arizona were searching for seven people Monday after flash floods ripped through two small farming communities about 100 miles west of Phoenix on Sunday.

Among the missing were two people who were seen being swept away by a torrent that coursed wildly through a normally dry desert wash without warning, said La Paz County Sheriff's Deputy Karen Harris.

An additional five people - migrant workers who labor in nearby melon, cotton and vegetable fields - were unaccounted for by their employers, Harris said.

Because of continuing high water, the search for the missing people was being conducted by helicopter, the Sheriff's Department said.

Residents of the small towns of Wenden and Salome, just north of Interstate 10, said the flood waters came with no warning before dawn

Sunday, trapping some in their homes and sending others to rooftops and into trees, Harris said.

About 200 people were rescued - by boat, skip loaders and at least 11 by military helicopters, she said.

There were no confirmed fatalities, and Harris said officials held out hope that the missing people were safe but hesitant to come forward because they were undocumented migrant workers.

The flooding was triggered by more than an inch of rain that fell suddenly Sunday morning in foothills northeast of the two towns.

"We didn't know anything until the runoff hit us," said Harris, who aided in the rescues.

"I was waist-high in water, walking into people's houses," she said.

"It was dark, cold and very wet, and people were trapped in their homes."

At daybreak - and continuing into Monday - rescue workers viewed the continuing destruction as water swept over vehicles, dislodged mobile homes from their foundations, tore

through small houses and turned travel trailers topsy-turvy.

"The level has gone down quite a bit, but the water is still running so high that we can't conduct search operations along the wash," Harris said Monday afternoon.

About 600 residents were evacuated from the two towns. Many found shelter with family or friends, but about 200 accepted Red Cross shelter in Parker, about 40 miles away.

Grief counselors were dispatched to the shelter, said Red Cross spokeswoman Andrea Munzer. "A lot of people said they barely escaped with their lives," she said. "It's overwhelming."

One man, Munzer said, reported that he was sitting in his pickup truck when he "saw a wall of water coming toward him. He said he just barely made it to the bed of his truck, and then had to swim from it."

Local officials declared a state of emergency in Wenden on Monday, and officials with the Federal Emergency Management Agency were expected to arrive Tuesday.

California minimum wage will get boost to \$6.75 by 2002

by Julie Linnick
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SACRAMENTO, Calif. - More than a million workers who earn the state minimum wage or close to it will see their pay jump at least \$1 to \$6.75 an hour by 2002, making California's minimum wage rate one of the highest in the United States.

The state's Industrial Welfare Commission voted 5-4 Monday to approve the increase.

The commission's decision was expected to be approved by the state legislature. "We will push many members to the limit of their ropes," Dunlap said. "A full-time minimum wage earner would make \$11,900 a year. The new rate is expected to add just over \$100 to that annual pay by 2002."

California will join Washington, Oregon and Massachusetts as the only states with the highest minimum wage

business interests and members of the state's agricultural community.

Wine grape grower John Baranek of Sacramento spoke against the wage boost at Monday's hearing. Baranek noted that some sectors of state agriculture are in a depression and that the rise in the minimum wage will have a negative ripple effect, particularly in the state's Central Valley.

"Basically, we're in a position where our backs are against the wall," Baranek said.

Baranek's sentiments were echoed by John Dunlap, president of the California Restaurant Association, which claims 15,000 members. Dunlap said he was disappointed with the wage increase, which he said will cut into the thin profits already experienced by many restaurant owners.

"We will push many members to the limit of their ropes," Dunlap said. "A full-time minimum wage earner would make \$11,900 a year. The new rate is expected to add just over \$100 to that annual pay by 2002."

rates. In a related matter, the commission voted to eliminate exemptions for several groups of workers, including full-time carnival ride operators and professional actors not covered by the state's minimum wage law.

The commission voted 3-2 to leave intact an exemption for the about 400 to 1,000 shepherds who tend sheep and lamb in California.

Advocates for the shepherds say that because of the exemption, ranchers can require them to work around the clock with no days off for a monthly wage of about \$900, in addition to room and board.

