

# commentary

from other pens...

## U.S. aims to reduce all forces in Korea

By George Gedda *Associated Press Writer*

WASHINGTON — They clapped, they chatted, they even held hands. It was a year ago Wednesday that the two Kims — Kim Dae-jung of South Korea and Kim Jong Il of North Korea — met in Pyongyang, generating hope that a half century of high-decibel, saber-rattling hostility was ending.

Now, a year later, U.S. officials are still wondering about the real intentions of the North's Kim — whether he is truly interested in reconciliation or merely making tactical moves as part of a continuing struggle.

The Bush administration hopes to glean some insights about his mindset during upcoming negotiations with Pyongyang that President Bush announced a week ago.

The administration's views are undoubtedly colored by what Pyongyang has been doing on the military preparedness front. For those who believe that Kim Jong Il has undergone a conversion of sorts, the past two years have not been reassuring.

Take, for example, the testimony of Gen. Thomas Schwartz, commanding general of the combined U.S.-South Korean Forces, before the Senate Armed Services Committee earlier this spring.

During the period leading up to the June 2000 North-South summit, he said, training levels in North Korea were record-breaking, with the focus on improving the readiness of major offensive forces.

Immediately following the summit, the North Korean People's Army training cycle "was the most extensive ever recorded."

Kim Jong Il "stubbornly adheres to his 'military first' policy, pouring huge amounts of his budget resources into the military," Schwartz said. As a result, his military forces are "bigger, better, closer (to the border) and deadlier" than they were a year ago.

Schwartz said North Korea possesses large numbers of chemical weapons that threaten the 37,000 U.S. forces in South Korea as well as civilian population centers. It also has the potential to develop biological and nuclear weapons. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, "North Korea may have produced enough (material) to produce one and possibly two nuclear weapons."

According to Schwartz, North Korea's ballistic missile inventory consists of 500 Scuds that could threaten the entire peninsula. Their artillery forces could fire off 500,000 rounds per hour at enemy forces and at Seoul.

About 700,000 troops and 8,000 artillery systems are positioned within 90 miles of the Demilitarized Zone. The 1.2 million-member army is the world's fifth largest. The air force has more than 1,700 planes, the navy more than 800 ships, including the world's largest submarine fleet.

All this in a country where the vast majority of people lack even the basic necessities. In recent years, hundreds of thousands — perhaps millions — of North Koreans have starved to death.

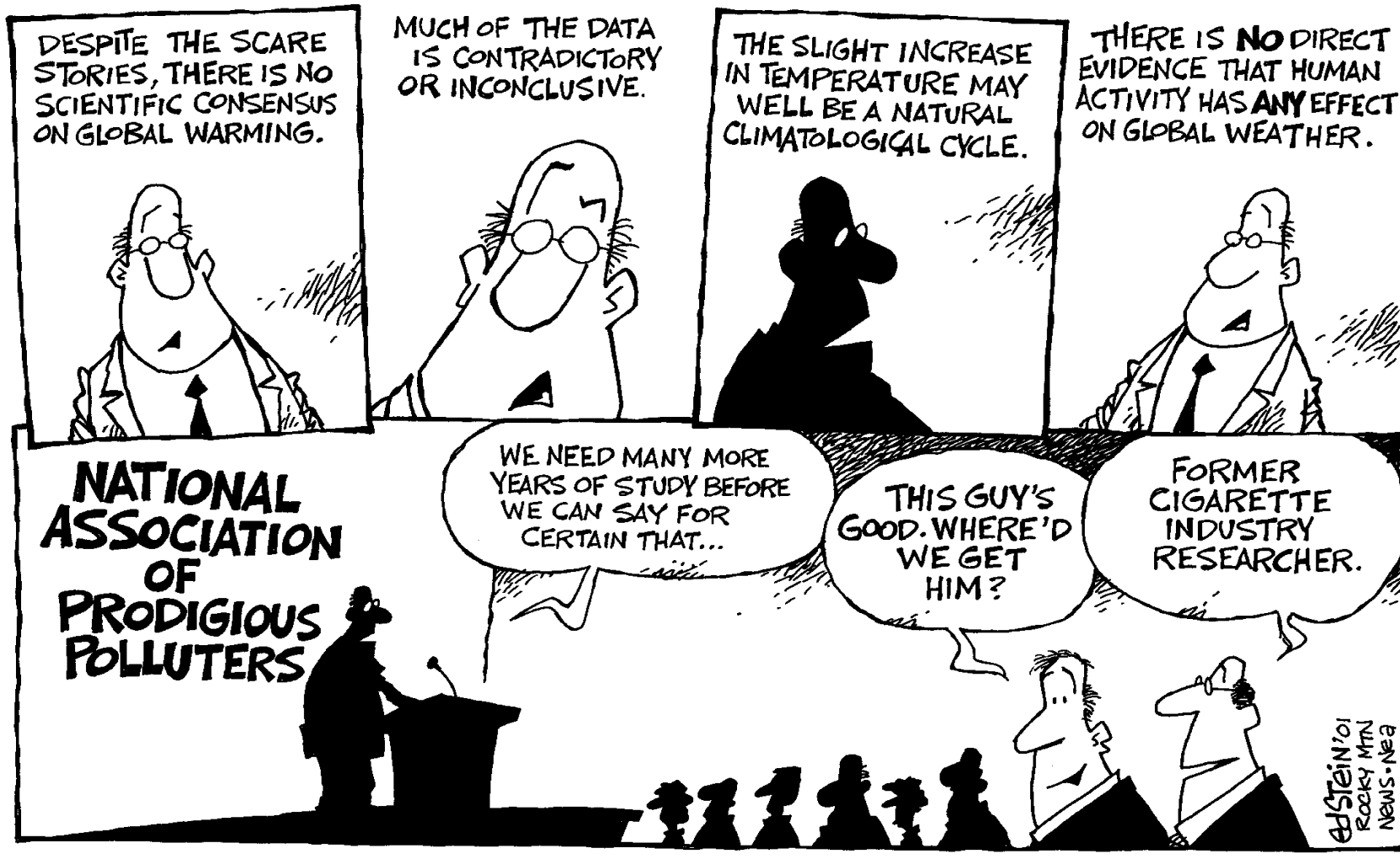
Schwartz's testimony gives context to a comment Kim Jong Il made to South Korean journalists last August. "In relations with foreign countries, we gain strength from military power, and my power comes from military power," he said.

Schwartz said in his testimony that the United States and South Korean militaries are well prepared for any eventuality.

The combined power of the two forces "can defeat a North Korean attack and destroy its military and regime," he said.

On Wednesday, Jack Pritchard, a State Department Korea expert, will meet in New York with North Korean Ambassador Li Hyong Chol to make arrangements for the first substantive bilateral talks since last fall.

Once the talks begin, the United States will attempt to engage North Korea on reducing the huge war-making capability on the peninsula almost 50 years after the Korean War ended.



## Is being a cat person inherited?

Over the Memorial Day weekend, some folks asked me to write about the cat.

The trouble is the cat (Tigger, office animal) hasn't done anything unusual lately.

He spends the morning lounging on top of the counter so as to get the maximum number of cat hairs on the circulation computer and classified desk. This allows him to greet all visitors and make sure they pet him.

By noon, he moves to an office, usually the news office, because Kimberly, the reporter, gives him treats. He stays in there for an hour or two before heading for his basket up front.

He sleeps in the basket for the rest of the day. At night, he checks the place for mice or bugs and sleeps on our chairs so that our clothes will be covered with cat hair the next day.

Occasionally, he will take off at a dead run for no apparent reason. This never lasts long, because he's a very overweight cat and running really isn't his thing.



**cynthia haynes**

• open season

He did disappear the other day, though, when my son brought his new kitten to the office.

Pomeroy is a tiny, furry bundle of sharp things and he isn't afraid to use all of them. Tigger was not amused by the antics of this quaint little bundle.

He didn't like all the movement — kittens are never still.

He didn't like all the claws — that wasn't fair. He doesn't have any.

And he definitely didn't like the intrusion — the office is his domain and all other cats are to stay elsewhere.

Pomeroy was just visiting, however. He was on his

way from Lawrence to Creede, Colo., where the two of them will spend the summer.

Son wasn't planning on having a cat. Pets are not part of his lease.

But, he went to a concert and they were giving away free (what other kind are there?) kittens in the parking lot. His date got one and talked him into taking the last kitten so that they could have the box to keep the little things in during the concert.

Since then — that was about a month ago — every time we got a call from Lawrence, Pomeroy was biting some part of son's anatomy — toes and ears seemed to be the most popular.

Lacy said he named his furry bundle after the band playing that night, but Steve says he should have called him Velcro — it clings to anything it can get its claws into. Son's back is a mass of scratches.

I never thought that being a cat person was catching, but all three of my children seem to be the same. Maybe it's genetic or maybe we're all just cat magnets.

## Smallest county betting on race track

Leaders of Kansas City, Kansas, and Wyandotte County are betting \$224 million that a new NASCAR race track can turn around the perpetually sagging economy of the state's smallest (in area) county.

Leaders of the new "unified government" (joining the largest city and the county under one council and mayor) hope the track will rev up some growth and drive the county roaring into the 21st century.

It's an impressive — and noisy — place. The stands seat only about as many people as a pro football stadium, but because they are built entirely on one side, they seem twice as big.

The infield is never quiet. When there is no race, no practice going on, cars from something called the Richard Petty Driving Experience circle the track. You can call 1-800-BEPETTY to reserve a time. It's \$100 for three laps, and there's a line.

The track is so big they had to move U.S. 24 (State Avenue) north in a half-mile loop to go around it. Much of the public money was spent on access roads, including an interchange on the Kansas Turnpike, but races still are expected to tie up traffic in half the metro area, drawing more than 100,000 people to the site.



**steve haynes**

• along the sappa

Nearby, 400 acres has been set aside of a major commercial development, not a yuppie mall, but a major blue-collar center featuring outfitter Cabellas, Nebraska Furniture, and other major discount stores.

The retail site alone is expected to draw from six or seven states. Kansas City, Kansas, has never had anything like it; the county's only mall went broke and was razed years ago. Today, it is said to be the only county in the Kansas City area without a single movie theater.

For years, Wyandotte County has been the economic stepchild of the metro area, where growth is dominated by ever-expanding, ever-rich Johnson County.

If you drew a line at the north edge of Johnson

County, and passed a law that no rich person could live north of it, you would pretty much define the population of Kansas City, Kansas.

The county is intensely blue collar, populated by the descendants of packing house workers, airplane and auto plant employees and refinery roughnecks. Slavic names abound, and in the old neighborhoods, defined by their ethnic churches, you can still find the foods and languages of a dozen or more eastern European nations.

The county has been known for its historically crooked politics and its urban ways. Rich in industrial plants, rail yards and jobs in the old days, it's seen its most successful residents move south as soon as they could.

Businesses and developers avoid Kansas City, Kansas. It's just not profitable. But the Kansas Speedway may be about to change all that. City leaders, the municipal utility and the state of Kansas (which approved the bonds for the project) are betting on it.

And if the NASCAR experience across the country is any indication, the ante may be a pretty good investment for poor little Wyandotte County.

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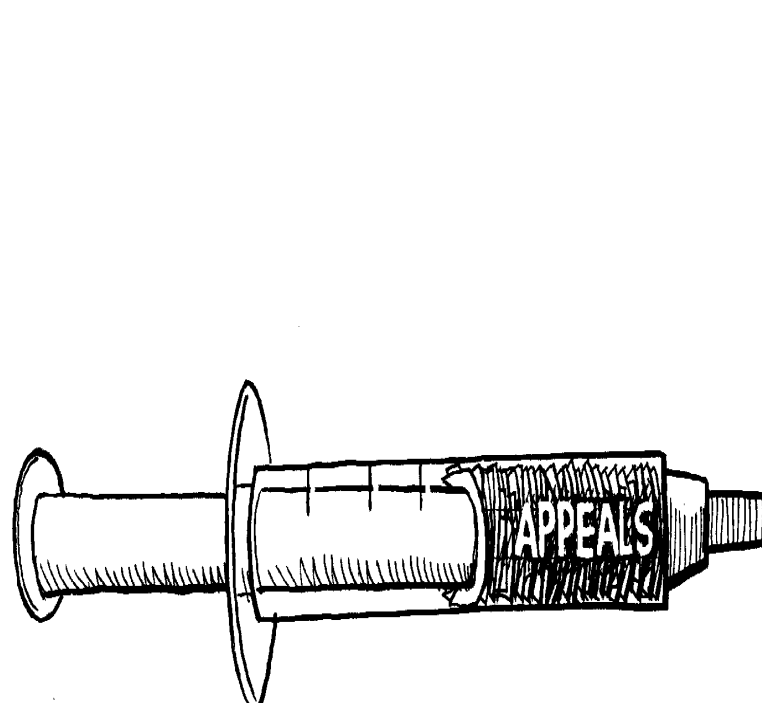
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## berry's world

