

North Korea switching to China for rice

by UPI

SEOUL -- North Korean officials have asked China, rather than South Korea, for 500,000 tons of rice because of a diplomatic flap with Seoul. The switch came amid flaring tensions between Pyongyang and Seoul during which the North threatened to cut off dialogue with the South and claimed the countries were on the brink of war. Yonhap cited a report in North Korea's *Hankyoreh* publication and an unnamed South Korean diplomatic source for its article. The South Korean Foreign Ministry denied hearing of such a request, Yonhap said. China hasn't responded to North Korea's request, however, a source said, and South Korea said it would send its usual amount of rice and fertilizer if asked to do so, Yonhap reported, citing a published report. The report in the daily *Hankyoreh* said Pyongyang wouldn't consider returning to South Korea for its aid until Seoul moves to improve ties.

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