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I. United States

1. Japan on DPRK Missile Test Fire

The Associated Press (Yuri Kageyama, "JAPAN SAYS IT HAS NOT CONFIRMED WHETHER NORTH KOREA FIRED MISSILE," Tokyo, 04/01/03), the Associated Press (Yuri Kageyama, "JAPAN ALLEGES NORTH KOREA TEST-FIRED MISSILE," Tokyo, 04/01/03), the Washington Post (Doug Struck, "NORTH KOREA FIRES SHORT-RANGE MISSILE," Tokyo, and CNN ("DOUBT OVER NORTH KOREA MISSILE TEST," Seoul, 04/01/03) reported that a high-profile effort by Japan to tighten surveillance of the DPRK got off to a shaky start as Japanese officials contradicted each other and their allies over reports Tuesday that the DPRK had test-fired a missile. The confusion came just days after Japan put its first spy satellites into orbit as part of a billion-dollar program aimed at monitoring moves by the DPRK to develop missiles or nuclear weapons. The DPRK denounced the satellite launch as a hostile act and hinted it might test-fire a missile in response. That scenario appeared to play out early Tuesday, when Japanese military and government officials announced

that the DPRK had launched a shore-to-ship missile from its west coast into the Yellow Sea. The US Defense Department confirmed the report, and officials in both countries described the missile as a short-range weapon that was not considered a threat. But the ROK said it had no evidence of a launch, and hours later officials in Tokyo weren't so sure themselves. A senior Defense Agency official issued a retraction Tuesday evening, telling reporters the government was "still trying to confirm" reports that a missile had been fired. 'We are still trying to confirm information including whether or not a launch took place," said the official, Shoei Yamanaka. "It is regrettable I must start by issuing this correction." Japanese officials were tightlipped about the source of their information. But the chief government spokesman did say the reports indicated that the DPRK had issued a keep-clear warning to maritime traffic similar to those that preceded previous test launches of anti-ship missiles.

2. Russia on US-Led War on Iraq

The Associated Press ("RUSSIA: IRAQI WAR LIKELY TO ENCOURAGE NORTH KOREA TO FURTHER DEVELOP ITS NUCLEAR PROGRAM," Moscow, 04/01/03) reported that the US-led invasion of Iraq will likely encourage the DPRK to speed up its nuclear program, a top Russian diplomat warned Tuesday. "Unfortunately, the Iraqi situation is nudging North Korea toward the enhancement of its own defense capabilities," Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Losyukov was quoted as saying by the Interfax news agency. "North Korea earlier said that if it feels a threat, it would take appropriate steps, possibly including the creation of a certain powerful weapon for its own defense," he said. Asked whether the war in Iraq would encourage the DPRK to continue developing its nuclear program, Losyukov was quoted as saying: "That is absolutely obvious." "I am afraid that the Iraqi situation is pushing (North Korea) in a direction that isn't in the interests of stability and security," Losyukov said. Russia has urged the US to immediately start talks with the DPRK, warning that it is the only way to peacefully settle the crisis.

3. ROK-US Training Exercises

BBC News ("US FIGHTERS STAY ON IN SOUTH KOREA," 04/01/03) reported that US 'stealth' fighters sent to the ROK for a training exercise are to stay on once the exercises end, a US military statement said on Tuesday. The decision will anger North Korea, which has warned that the US is building up its troops in the region in preparation for an attack. The US sent six F-117A radar-evading airplanes to ROK in March as part of annual military exercises. "Extending their training time in the Korean Theatre of Operations affords an excellent opportunity to further enhance interoperability while also enhancing deterrence," the US statement said. It came on the same day that the DPRK was reported to have fired a short-range anti-ship missile off its west coast. Initially the Japanese Defence Agency said the missile was launched at about 1015 local time (0115 GMT) from the DPRK's north-west coast, and that it constituted no threat to Japan. However the report, which was dismissed by ROK officials, was later retracted by Japan.

4. SARS Development

BBC News ("FEARS MOUNT OVER DEADLY BUG," 04/01/03) reported that the deadly pneumonia, which is spreading across the world, could be more contagious than previously thought, an expert has warned. Hong Kong, which has been hit hard, has established quarantine camps in an effort to try to contain the spread of the disease. The illness, dubbed Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), has so far killed 62 people worldwide, and infected 1,800. Initially it was thought that the illness could only be spread by close contact. But Dr Hitoshi Oshitani, a World Health Organization

(WHO) expert, told the BBC that this was not necessarily the case. He said: "In most cases infection occurs by close person-to-person contact, but there are several cases now that we cannot explain by this model of transmission." He stressed that SARS was more contagious than the deadly Ebola virus. "Ebola is not highly contagious in terms of human to human transmission. And we know how to prevent that. "But this is a new disease. We still don't completely understand the means of transmission."

Agence France-Presse ("LIVESTOCK IN CHINA LIKELY CAUSE OF KILLER PNEUMONIA: SOURCES," Manila, 04/01/03) reported that livestock in southern PRC may be the source of the mysterious virus that has killed more than 60 people and caused a global health scare, sources close to the World Health Organisation (WHO) said. "WHO is working on a theory that the virus has its source in farm animals in southern China," a source close to the Geneva-based body told AFP. The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) which erupted in Guangdong province has spread to Hong Kong and been taken worldwide in an unprecedented fashion by airline passengers. "In some areas in Guangdong province in southern China, people just live neck to jaw with animals -- pigs, chickens, ducks are everywhere," the source said. Scientists have already ruled out a link between SARS and bird flu, also a viral disease highly contagious to chickens, ducks, turkeys and other birds but not dangerous to other animals and humans. Asked to confirm the links between SARS and farm animals in southern PRC, Peter Cordingley, the spokesman for the Manila-based Western Pacific WHO regional office, said: "At this stage, we are not saying this is the cause but is certainly something we are looking into in the general scheme of things."

5. PRC SARS Response

Agence France-Presse ("RED TAPE, FACE SAVING BEHIND CHINA'S PNEUMONIA SILENCE," Beijing, 04/01/03) reported that red tape, face-saving measures and institutional incompetence are most likely behind the PRC's refusal to face up to the outbreak of a deadly respiratory disease, experts warned. Under international criticism, the PRC's Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP) issued its first bulletin on atypcial pneumonia since March 26 urging all health departments to take effective measures to control the disease that has killed at least 62 people worldwide. Doctors were also urged to report to their provincial disease control centers any patients showing symptoms of atypical pneumonia, guidelines on the CDCP's website said. A team of World Health Organization experts was Tuesday also awaiting Beijing's permission to travel to southern Guangdong province where they believe Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) first broke out last November. The WHO experts were reportedly seeking to investigate whether or not farm animals in southern China were the source of the virus. "China needs to get up to speed with the international effort to map the spread of this disease," said Dr. James Maguire, a WHO expert currently in Beijing awaiting permission to go to Guangdong. "During a global epidemic all players need to participate, if a major player chooses not to, this could be very problematic," he told AFP. The team of five WHO experts was also waiting for China to fulfill its promise of providing daily provincial reports updating the progress of the disease nationwide, but so far such reports have not been forthcoming.

6. US on DPRK Human Rights

CNN News (Elise Labott, "US CITES CHINA, ISRAEL, SAUDI ARABIA FOR POOR HUMAN RIGHTS," Washington, 04/01/03) and BBC News ("NORTH KOREA RIGHTS 'WORSE THAN IRAQ,'" 04/01/03) reported that the US State Department official responsible for human rights has said that the DPRK probably has worse human rights than Iraq - despite justifying its current invasion of Iraq in part by citing human rights violations. The comment came as the State Department released its annual

appraisal of human rights conditions in 196 countries around the world. Several of the 49 members the US says are part of its coalition against Iraq are also cited in the report for rights records that "remain poor" or for serious problems in protecting human rights. Israel comes in for criticism for its "treatment of Arab citizens" - but only after a preliminary denunciation of the human rights abuses of such "terrorist organisations" as Hamas, Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad. Other nations cited for violations include the PRC, Cuba, Iran, and Zimbabwe.

7. Russia Domestic Politics

Reuters (Maxim Filimonov, "RUSSIAN TYCOON PUTS UP $100 MLN TO THWART PUTIN," London, 04/01/03) reported that Russian business magnate and former Kremlin insider Boris Berezovsky says he is putting $100 million aside to bankroll a political alliance in Russia aimed at thwarting President Vladimir Putin. Berezovsky, who on Wednesday will resume a court battle in London against Russian efforts to extradite him, said he had set himself the goal of putting together a right-left coalition to prevent Putin tightening his stranglehold on parliament. A once powerful political player in Russia and rumoured king-maker, Berezovsky became marginalised under Putin as the Russian leader wrested control of his media empire from him and went to live in self-imposed exile in the West. Berezovsky, who criticises Putin for autocratic methods, told Reuters in an interview he had earmarked $100 million to set up "an effective opposition" from members of the far-right and far-left to contest this year's parliamentary poll. Elections are scheduled to take place in December in the State Duma (lower house), where pro-Kremlin supporters hold a commanding majority, and will be followed in early 2004 by presidential elections. "At this historic stage of 2003, I, and those who consider it necessary that Russia develops as a liberal state, have the fundamental task of not allowing the formation in the Duma of a constitutional majority for the Kremlin," Berezovsky said. He said his aim was to build an alliance that could win more than a third of places in the 450-seat Duma. Putin's camp controls enough seats to pass legislation but is short of a two-thirds majority required for constitutional changes. The new opposition, Berezovsky said, would deny Putin the two-thirds support he needed to further strengthen his grip on power further and extend his term in office. Putin has so far shown no intention of changing the constitution.

8. DPRK Fighter Jet Missions

The Washington Post (Doug Struck, "NORTH KOREAN JETS KEEP THEIR DISTANCE DURING US MISSIONS," Tokyo, 04/01/03) reported that DPRK fighter jets have flown beyond the Korean coastline during US reconnaissance flights but have apparently not tried to intercept another reconnaissance mission, as they did early this month, the commander of US forces in the Pacific said today. "We have seen some MiG activity over water" during US surveillance missions, Adm. Thomas B. Fargo said. "But I couldn't characterize it as being directed at our surveillance flights. As a matter of fact, I'm not sure what it's precisely directed at right now. We're looking at it." Four DPRK MiGs intercepted an Air Force reconnaissance plane 150 miles from their coastline on March 2, according to the Pentagon. One flew within 50 feet of the US plane, a modified Boeing 707, in what US officials called a "reckless and provocative" act. After 10 days of deliberation, the Air Force decided to resume the flights, which are watching for a possible missile launch by DPRK during heightened tension between the countries over the DPRK's nuclear program. Fargo declined to say whether US planes on recent missions turned away when DPRK fighter jets were detected off the coast. Other military sources had said that strategy would likely be used to avoid a confrontation. The admiral noted that the US had not "seen anything that indicated that [the MiGs] acted in a manner to effect another intercept."

9. PRC Response to US Human Rights Report

The Associated Press (Audra Ang, "CHINA EXPRESSES "STRONG DISSATISFACTION" WITH US HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT," Beijing, 04/01/03) reported that the PRC expressed "strong dissatisfaction and opposition" Tuesday to a US State Department report denouncing the country for what the US said was a long list of human rights violations. The annual report, released Monday, said the PRC had maintained its less-than-stellar record, which included "instances of extrajudicial killings, torture and mistreatment of prisoners, forced confessions, arbitrary arrest and detention, lengthy incommunicado detention and denial of due process." But the report also credited the government for releasing a number of prominent dissidents and granting permission for senior representatives of the Dalai Lama to visit China. At a regularly scheduled briefing, PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao vehemently dismissed the report as having "no regard to the facts." "We wish to express our strong dissatisfaction and opposition. We have been protecting and promoting human rights and basic freedom," Liu said. "We have made great strides forward. "We would like to use the opportunity to ask the US not to interfere in other peoples' internal affairs, not to have a double standard and not to lose the trust of the people around the world." The US government usually attempts to censure China on human rights at the annual meeting of the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva, now in its third week. US Secretary of State Colin Powell declined on Monday to say whether Washington will introduce a PRC resolution at the commission meeting.

10. Japan Domestic Politics

The Japan Times (Reiji Yoshida, "KOIZUMI'S POWER APPEARS TO BE SLIPPING," 04/01/03) reported that Japan Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has gone from bypassing his party's power brokers to pleading with them -- unsuccessfully. The change in tactics, as well as the result, indicates that his clout within the Liberal Democratic Party is on the wane. That's the widespread view in Nagata-cho, Japan's political epicenter, now that Koizumi has tabbed Yoshiyuki Kamei, as minister of agriculture, forestry and fisheries. Kamei was formally appointed to the post Tuesday, succeeding Tadamori Oshima, who resigned a day earlier over a series of money-related scandals involving his secretaries. In the early days of his administration, Koizumi claimed he would "break up the old structure" of the LDP, and went around powerful leaders of factional groups within his party to directly select members of his Cabinet. This marked a clear departure from the LDP's tradition in which almost everything was determined based on the balance of power between party factions. Koizumi's management style, intended to deprive factional leaders of their source of power, was dubbed "single-rod fishing" by members of the factions he bypassed. But in selecting a successor to Oshima, Koizumi resorted to sounding out faction leaders. "That's because I have been criticized for acting arbitrarily without consulting (the faction leaders)," Koizumi said early Tuesday after naming Kamei, a former transport minister, as farm minister. Koizumi admitted that he sought cooperation from leaders of rival factions in his bid to find an appropriate man to take over from Oshima. He failed to get it.

11. Japan-Russia Relations

The Japan Times ("KOIZUMI, YELTSIN DISCUSS IMPORTANCE OF BILATERAL TRUST," 04/01/03) reported that Japan Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and visiting former Russian President Boris Yeltsin discussed on Tuesday the need to boost bilateral trust in dealing with political issues as well as energy projects. "I told (Yeltsin) we should map out activities through which we can develop trust" to resolve Japan's claims on Russian-held islands and sign a post-World War II peace treaty, Koizumi said. They also discussed the need for negotiating the issues in line with bilateral

documents, including the 1993 Tokyo Declaration. The declaration acknowledges the territorial dispute and commits the two countries to work out a peace treaty. Soviet troops seized the three islands and a group of islets off Hokkaido at the end of the war. The dispute has prevented the two countries from signing a peace treaty. Yeltsin told reporters separately that he and Koizumi also talked about a plan to construct oil pipelines in Siberia and transport natural gas to Japan from Sakhalin.

The NAPSNet Daily Report aims to serve as a forum for dialogue and exchange among peace and security specialists. Conventions for readers and a list of acronyms and abbreviations are available to all recipients. For descriptions of the world wide web sites used to gather information for this report, or for more information on web sites with related information, see the collection of other NAPSNet resources.
We invite you to reply to today's report, and we welcome commentary or papers for distribution to the network.

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