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CONTENTS

I. United States

1. EU Trip to DPRK
2. DPRK Listing as Terrorism Sponsor
3. US Spying on DPRK
4. US Troops in ROK
5. DPRK Food Shortage
6. Alleged US Military Visit to Taiwan
7. Taiwan Weapons Purchases
8. US Policy toward Taiwan
9. US Spy Plane in PRC
10. PRC Response to US Missile Defense
11. PRC-Australian Relations
12. US Nuclear Strategy
13. Russian Asian Policy
14. Japanese Textbook Row

II. Republic of Korea 1. DPRK-Russia Defense Deal
2. US Envoy to Visit ROK
3. DPRK-Czech Republic Relations
4. DPRK-US Framework Seminar
5. DPRK Participation in ADB Meeting
6. ROK Military Purchases

I. United States

1. EU Trip to DPRK

Reuters (Gareth Jones, "TOP EU TEAM POISED FOR HISTORIC TRIP TO N.KOREA," Brussels, 04/30/01) reported that a high-level European Union (EU) delegation led by Swedish Prime Minister

Goran Persson was to travel to the DPRK on Wednesday. In a statement posted on its website on Monday, the government of Sweden stated, "The main purpose of the visit is to manifest the great importance which the EU attaches to a continuation of the policy of reconciliation between the two Koreas. The EU wants to help to make this process irreversible, and this will be explained both in Pyongyang and in Seoul." Sweden said that it also planned to raise human rights concerns, economic reform and the issue of missile control during the talks in Pyongyang with DPRK leader Kim Jong-il. One unnamed Brussels-based official stated, "The EU expects the DPRK to confirm the missile freeze will stay. We also hope for a positive response to concerns of the EU and the international community regarding North Korea's role as a provider of missiles and missile technology." He also dismissed media speculation that the EU was trying to fill a diplomatic void left by the US.

2. DPRK Listing as Terrorism Sponsor

The Washington Post (Alan Sipress, "SUDAN, N. KOREA CITED FOR GAINS ON TERRORISM," 5/1/01) reported that US State Department officials released an annual report on terrorism Monday which said that Sudan and the DPRK have begun cooperating with the US in fighting terrorist groups but have not yet done enough to be removed from a US list of countries sponsoring terrorism. Edmund J. Hull, the State Department's acting coordinator for counterterrorism, said, "They've evidenced a serious interest in getting out of the terrorism business. That's something we want to encourage." Barring more progress, Hull said, Sudan and the DPRK would stay on the list of state sponsors of terrorism.

3. US Spying on DPRK

Reuters ("NORTH KOREA SAYS U.S. FLEW 150 SPY FLIGHTS IN APRIL," Tokyo, 5/1/01) reported that the DPRK's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said in a report monitored in Japan that US spy planes had conducted over 150 flights over its territory in April taking photos and conducting electronic reconnaissance and other espionage activities. KCNA said that among the flights were over 30 by U-2 strategic reconnaissance planes.

4. US Troops in ROK

The Associated Press ("N KOREA DEMANDS WITHDRAWAL OF US TROOPS FROM S KOREA," Seoul, 04/30/01) reported that the Rodong Sinmun, the official newspaper for the DPRK's ruling Worker's Party, on Sunday demanded an end to the US military presence in the ROK. It stated, "Our stand on disarmament on the Korean Peninsula is clear. The U.S. troop pullout is prerequisite for disarmament on the Korean Peninsula." It added, "It is our stand that the North and the South of Korea should materialize disarmament in the process of going toward reunification, providing that the U.S. troops withdraw from South Korea."

5. DPRK Food Shortage

Reuters (Paul Eckert, "N.KOREA DIPLOMACY LIFTS HOPES, BUT CRISIS PERSISTS," Beijing, 04/28/01) reported that the Catholic international aid agency Caritas on Saturday issued its 2001 appeal for US$3.2 million to combat the food and health care crisis in the DPRK. The appeal said that it was concerned that the diplomatic developments on the Korean Peninsula had created false perceptions that the crisis had passed. It stated, "This is not the case and humanitarian needs remain compelling." Kathi Zellweger, Director of International Cooperation at Caritas Hong Kong, warned, "We still have the lean period of May to June when their own stocks are totally depleted and

they have nothing." She said, however, that the diplomatic was having an impact in other areas, noting, "There is a bit more interest from the business community, and you now meet people who are going there to at least find out what the situation is like." She added that DPRK officials "are starting to realize that they will have to make adjustments and develop a climate that is acceptable and interesting enough for investors to come in." She stated, "The situation will only improve if they revitalize their industries," adding that Caritas and other aid agencies were starting to shift their focus to rehabilitation from relief. Regarding changes in the DPRK, Zellweger argued, "The direction is more important than the speed. If they go too fast then they can't cope, so it is better if they move slowly but in the right direction." She said that during her most recent visit the DPRK had asked for help in getting second-hand computers for use in schools.

Reuters (Vissuta Pothong, "N.KOREA, THAILAND FAIL TO AGREE RICE DEAL," Bangkok, 04/30/01) reported that Thailand government spokesman Yongyuth Tiyapairath said on Monday that Thailand had failed to agree to a deal to sell the DPRK rice on a state-to-state basis. He stated, "North Korea's vice minister for trade, Ri Ryong Nam, has yet to agree to buy 500,000 tons of Thai rice as expected due to some difficulties regarding the negotiation between the two countries." He said that the DPRK demanded to buy either five or 10 percent broken rice from Thailand, which are considered good quality and in high demand in the world market, but Thailand insisted that it could supply only 25 percent broken rice grade at US$140 per ton. The DPRK also asked the Thai government to grant it a 12-month grace period before it started paying for the rice, and then the DPRK would take three years to repay the debt. Yongyuth added, "North Korea also did not want to talk about the debts that it owes the Thai government, while Thailand wanted the issue to be tabled." He stated, however, "As far as we know, the country would face a food shortage soon without bringing new shipments of food into the country in a month or so." Yongyuth said that it was not known whether negotiations between the two countries would continue after a signing ceremony for the deal scheduled on Monday was cancelled.

6. Alleged US Military Visit to Taiwan

Taipei Times (Brian Hsu, "US NAVY OFFICIAL MADE SECRET VISIT," 4/30/01) reported that defense sources told the Taipei Times on April 29 that Admiral Dennis Blair, US commander in chief of the US Pacific Command, paid a secret visit to Taiwan earlier this month in what was the highest-level visit by a US military official to Taiwan since 1979. The source said that Blair visited Taiwan for one day nearly three weeks ago. The source declined to reveal, however, why Blair went to Taiwan. Erich Shih, a senior editor with Defense International magazine, stated, "Blair's visit to Taiwan means a lot to us. It could mean a military alliance of some sort is forming between Taiwan and the US. It could also mean that the US military is planning to adjust its strategy in the Western Pacific region on the basis of the situation in the Taiwan Strait. Our military needs, for instance, to strengthen its communication with its US counterpart. It is a vital area that Taiwan needs to beef up." Blair's visit did not seem to have anything to do with the spy-plane incident. It was more likely in connection with the mission of a US navy delegation, which came to Taiwan almost at the same time. That delegation visited to provide wireless communication codes for use between the militaries of Taiwan and the US. An anonymous defense official said that one of the greatest aims that the US military wants to achieve is to help Taiwan become better able to defend itself against military threats from across the Taiwan Strait. The official said, "The US wants to achieve this aim by providing all sorts of necessary assistance to Taiwan. The provision of communication codes to Taiwan is one example." [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for May 1, 2001.]

Taipei Times ("DEFENSE MINISTRY DENIES DENNIS BLAIR MADE SECRET VISIT," Taipei, 5/1/01) reported that the Taiwan Ministry of National Defense said on April 30 that it has no knowledge of

any secret visit to Taiwan by Dennis Blair, commander-in-chief of the US Pacific Command, early this month. A ministry official said, "There is no record showing that Admiral Blair visited Taiwan recently." While not dismissing the existence of close military ties between Taiwan and the US, the official said that exchanges of visits by their senior officers are "nothing unusual." The official said, "Out of concern for protests and boycotts by mainland China, those visits have traditionally been kept secret. However, there is in fact no record showing that Blair recently visited Taiwan." The official went on to say that the US military usually invites the commander-in-chief of a branch of Taiwan's armed forces to visit the US each year. He said, "We have also invited American generals to visit Taiwan regularly to exchange views on the ... situation in the Taiwan Strait and Taiwan's defense capabilities." [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for May 1, 2001.]

7. Taiwan Weapons Purchases

The Washington Times (Martin Walker, "TAIWAN TIES ARMS BUYS TO BEIJING MISSILE CUTS," 4/30/01) reported that Taiwan's top diplomatic representative in the United States, Chien-Jen Chen, said late last week that Taiwan is prepared to reassess its planned weapons purchases from the US if the PRC cuts its missile buildup. Chen said, "If the People's Republic of China is going to pull back or reduce their missile deployment, or if the military threat lessens, we can rethink our military procurements. Then we would be able to resume the cross-straits dialogue with the PRC and discover how we can cooperate to build security and prosperity in general. Our policy is to try to maintain peace. And rather than rely on military procurement, we would like to improve cross-straits relations, through our economic ties, through cultural and educational exchanges. There are so many different aspects we can use to make war unnecessary." Chen said that the government of Taiwan supported the broad outlines of a reconciliation plan proposed by former Taiwanese Prime Minister Vincent Siew that provides for a European-style common market between the PRC and Taiwan that could then grow with time into a closer political integration. Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian "has said that he'd like to see the two sides try to understand each other through more exchanges, more economic and cultural integration first, and then gradually move on to more peaceful cooperation and even political integration.... But there has yet been no response from Beijing. I think we are moving in that direction, whatever common market or European Union name you may want to call it." [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for April 30, 2001.]

8. US Policy toward Taiwan

The Christian Science Monitor (John Dillin, "THE PRICE TAIWAN PAYS FOR US VOW OF 'HELP,'" Washington, 4/30/01) reported that despite US President George W. Bush's pledge to do "whatever it took" to defend Taiwan if it were attacked by the PRC, critics said that the US continues to treat Taiwan in a shabby and embarrassing manner. A just-released study by the US Republican staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee cites numerous examples of what it calls "petty and humiliating restrictions" that the US puts on Taiwan, such as: requiring Taiwan military personnel to wear only civilian clothing while training in the US, forbidding Taiwan diplomats to fly their flag over their official building in Washington, refusing to grant access for Taiwan's military to US submarines even though military personnel from the PRC were permitted aboard, forbidding Taiwan diplomats to use official diplomatic license plates in the US, and calling its top official here "representative," not "ambassador." Analysts said that that the constraints are all the more notable since US troops may someday be required to defend Taiwan against a military attack by the PRC. Defense analyst Ted Carpenter of the Cato Institute in Washington said that US attitudes toward the PRC appear to be hardening in the wake of the EP-3E standoff. Carpenter said that the time has come to shift away

from the official US policy of ambiguity. He advocated a "porcupine" strategy that provides Taiwan with whatever military "quills" it needs to fend off the PRC. He also suggested that Bush is "moving in that direction" with his approval of the latest Taiwan arms sale. With a porcupine strategy, he says, "you simply have to raise the cost of [PRC] military action to such a high level that it heads off the initial attack. That is much more reliable than some paper US security guarantee." [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for April 30, 2001.]

9. US Spy Plane in PRC

The New York Times (Erik Eckholm, "US TEAM ON WAY TO INSPECT DOWNED SPY PLANE IN CHINA," Beijing, 5/1/01) reported that at the invitation of the PRC, a US technical team set out on Monday for Hainan Island to inspect the damaged spy plane involved in the recent accident. The PRC government announced on April 29 that US officials would be allowed to look over the plane. The announcement indicated that secret negotiations have continued since a senior US delegation visited the PRC earlier this month. It said that the two sides had "agreed to discuss ways to avoid similar incidents in the future," apparently through an established joint Military Maritime Commission. However, the announcement also repeated the PRC claim that "the US plane rammed into a Chinese plane" and said, "The US side has agreed to consider making a payment to the Chinese side." Further negotiations, it said, will determine "the specific amount of the U.S. payment and the items to be covered." The report of a possible payment seemed intended to suggest that the US may be admitting fault for the collision. However, US Ambassador Joseph Prueher stated, "We made no commitments on the payments. We are very pleased that we were able to get the initial step towards getting the airplane back." A Western diplomat familiar with the talks said earlier that the US had considered paying some relatively modest expenses connected with the return of the spy plane. Such payments, if presented in the PRC in sufficiently ambiguous terms, might give the PRC leaders a face-saving way to release the plane. [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for May 1, 2001.]

10. PRC Response to US Missile Defense

The New York Times (Michael R. Gordon, "CHINA LOOKS TO FOIL U.S. MISSILE DEFENSE SYSTEM," Beijing, 4/29/01) reported that the PRC Director General of Arms Control, Sha Zukang, said in an interview that the PRC is focusing on low-cost ways to thwart the US plan for missile defense, including ways to attack the defense system itself. Sha said, "We have seen that the United States wantonly bombed Yugoslavia and that Yugoslavia had no means to retaliate. Once the United States believes it has both a strong spear and a strong shield, it could lead them to conclude that nobody can harm the United States and they can harm anyone they like anywhere in the world. There could be many more bombings like what happened in Kosovo." Sha stated that the PRC's fear was not that the US would launch a surprise attack on the PRC, but that a missile shield would lead US politicians to believe that the US was so powerful and well protected that it could act with virtual impunity. He said, "Even when national missile defense was not there they bombed the Sudan, they bombed Afghanistan and they bombed Iraq. It could lead to the development of a tendency of the use or threat of use of force, more often than is necessary by the United States, in the conduct of international relations." Sha also said that in an effort to ease PRC concerns, US President George W. Bush has proposed a discussion on strategic issues in a letter to PRC President Jiang Zemin. He said that while the PRC is willing to listen to any ideas that the Bush administration may have, the dialogue had not yet begun because the Bush administration was still putting its national security team in place. Sha also stressed that deep cuts in US nuclear arms would not placate the PRC if they were made in parallel with the development of a missile defense. Sha suggested that instead of

engaging in a large, costly buildup, the PRC would concentrate on a range of relatively low-cost responses, such as developing plans to attack the radar network and communication nodes. He said, "We will do whatever possible to ensure that our security will not be compromised, and we are confident that we can succeed without an arms race," he said. "We believe defense itself needs defense. It is a defense system. It has many, many parts and most of them are vulnerable to an attack." Yan Xuetong, Director of the China Institute for Contemporary International Relations at Qinghua University, suggested a possible compromise whereby the US could build a system that could intercept no more than five missiles. That, he said, would protect against a possible threat from, say, Iran or Iraq without jeopardizing the PRC force. [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for April 30, 2001.]

11. PRC-Australian Relations

Agence France Presse ("RELATIONS WITH CHINA SOUND, AUSTRALIAN PM INSISTS," Sydney, 4/30/01) reported that Australian Prime Minister John Howard faced strong criticism Monday of his handling of Australia's relationship with the PRC, but declared links sound despite rising tensions of the last fortnight. Howard also warned against exaggerating the significance of PRC concern over the intrusion of Australian warships in PRC waters and over his support for US President George W. Bush's stance on Taiwan. Howard said that he did not believe the Sino- Australian relationship was "shaky" at all, adding that relations were "quite good" and much better than those of a few years ago. He said, "I don't think we should over-react or exaggerate the significance of what has occurred in the past couple of weeks." His comments followed a protest by the PRC last week over the passage of three warships through the Taiwan Strait, which Howard described as "fully in accordance with international law." The PRC protest was seen in Australia as a breach of long-established PRC practice and a consequence of Howard's comments last week backing Bush's pledge to defend Taiwan against PRC aggression.

12. US Nuclear Strategy

The Washington Post (Walter Pincus, "US CONSIDERS SHIFT IN NUCLEAR TARGETS," 4/29/01) reported that according to administration officials and independent experts, the US is considering major changes in its nuclear posture, including slashing the number of strategic warheads, taking most B-52 and B-2 bombers out of the nuclear force and shifting some targets from Russia to the PRC. US President George W. Bush outlined his goals for building missile defenses and reducing nuclear weapons in a speech Tuesday at the National Defense University at Fort McNair. Meanwhile, an inter-agency review of nuclear strategy and weaponry, one of several reviews of the military ordered by Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, is generating specific ideas as it moves closer to completion in June. Some officials said that the US Defense Department is prepared to cut the number of strategic warheads from about 7,500 to below 2,500 if the president changes the formal guidance on what nuclear forces are needed to meet the declining threat from Russia, the smaller but growing challenge from the PRC, and the limited danger posed by nations such as Iraq, the DPRK, and Iran. Bruce Blair, president of the Center for Defense Information, an independent organization, said on April 28 that he expects that the Bush administration's new guidance to the US Defense Department on nuclear weapons needs "to shift away from Russia and toward China," with perhaps "a 50 percent reduction in Russian targets and a 100 percent increase in China targets." Blair said that the shift might entail basing more Trident submarines on the West Coast and placing some B-2s in Guam. [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for April 30, 2001.]

13. Russian Asian Policy

The Washington Times (David R. Sands, "RUSSIA STRENGTHENS ASIAN TIES," 5/1/01) reported that Russian President Vladimir Putin is continuing to strengthen its ties with its Asian allies, despite strong US objections. This was demonstrated in Russia's welcoming of PRC Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan over the weekend and the signing of a new weapons deal with the DPRK last week. PRC diplomats in Russia told the Itar-Tass news agency that expanded military cooperation was a key agenda item for Tang during his visit. Russian sources said that the DPRK deal, announced on April 28 during a Moscow visit by PRC Foreign Minister Kim Il-chol, would allow the DPRK to repair and modernize Soviet-era tanks, fighter planes and submarines. Alexander Lukin, an instructor at the Institute for International Affairs in Moscow and now a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution, said, "For Russia, the military- industrial complex supports a lot of workers and their families at a very difficult time for the economy. This should really be seen as a social issue, something I don't think is really understood in the United States." Lukin said that one force driving closer Russia-PRC ties was clearly a shared concern about US foreign policy moves. He said, "I don't see it as a purely anti-American alliance, but that doesn't mean that U.S. policy did not contribute to developments here." [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for May 1, 2001.]

14. Japanese Textbook Row

Reuters ("JAPAN SAYS SEEKS 'SOFT LANDING' IN TEXTBOOK SPAT," Tokyo, 5/1/01) reported that Japan's new Foreign Minister Makiko Tanaka said on Tuesday that she would try for a "soft landing" of the controversy over a history textbook. Though Tanaka said she would personally check how history is portrayed in the disputed textbook, intended for children aged 13-15, she declined to comment on the possibility of ordering another revision. Tanaka said in a recent group interview, "I was surprised to see there were still those kind of people who try to distort facts in a textbook. It is necessary that we recognize the (historical) facts as facts."

II. Republic of Korea

1. DPRK-Russia Defense Deal

The Korea Herald (Hwang Jang-jin, "RUSSIA'S DEFENSE DEAL WITH N. KOREA NOT VIEWED AS THREAT TO TIES WITH S. KOREA," Seoul, 04/30/01) and Chosun Ilbo ("NK, RUSSIA INK ACCORDS ON DEFENSE INDUSTRY COOPERATION," Seoul, 04/29/01) reported that the defense agreements signed by Russia and the DPRK Friday will not compromise ties between Russia and the ROK, as the accords are based solely on upgrading the DPRK's aging military equipment, ROK officials said. They also said that the agreements are seen as part of Russia's broader diplomatic maneuver aimed at having more say in Korea issues by strengthening its ties with both Koreas. Defense chiefs from Russia and the DPRK signed agreements on the defense industry, including equipment and broader military cooperation. DPRK Defense Minister Kim Il-chol and his Russian counterpart Sergei Ivanov and Deputy Prime Minister Ilya Klebanov signed the deals. The agreements are aimed largely at modernizing the DPRK's military equipment that Russia provided during the Soviet era. Details were not disclosed. "We don't see that the agreements will damage our ties with Russia," an ROK Foreign Ministry official said.

2. US Envoy to Visit ROK

The Korea Herald (Shin Yong-bae, "ARMITAGE, KELLY TO VISIT SEOUL TO DISCUSS N.K. POLICY," Seoul, 04/30/01) reported that an ROK diplomatic source said Sunday that senior US foreign policy officials, including Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, will visit the ROK next month to coordinate US DPRK policies with ROK officials. The source said that US is sending Armitage and James Kelly, the nominee for assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, to Seoul because Secretary of State Colin Powell's trip has been delayed. Powell planned to visit the ROK and Japan during the second week of May on his first Asian tour. He was reported to have called off the trip as a result of his busy schedule in Washington. The visit by Armitage and Kelly will likely take place later in May given the US Senate's expected approval of Kelly's nomination possibly by next week, and Powell's talks with the Russian foreign minister in mid-May.

3. DPRK-Czech Republic Relations

The Korea Times ("PRAGUE TO SEND DELEGATION TO NK," Seoul, 04/29/01) reported that the Czech Republic is planning to send a fact-finding parliamentary delegation to the DPRK in the near future as part of its efforts to help reduce tension on the Korean peninsula, a senior Czech parliamentarian said. "Some weeks ago, I had a meeting with the North's Deputy Foreign Minister [Choe Su-hon] in Prague. I got an invitation for our parliamentary delegation to visit Pyongyang," said Lubomir Zaoralek, 45, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee at the Czech Chamber of Deputies. Zaoralek, leading a delegation of four Czech deputies, came to Seoul Thursday for a four-day visit aimed at strengthening political and economic exchanges between the two countries. "It will be a visit on the level of a vice chairman from the foreign committee and only three deputies will participate in the journey to North Korea, but it will be the starting point for our mutual contact with North Korea," he said. The Czech parliamentarians' trip to Pyongyang will help the ROK ease tension and promote reconciliation with the DPRK, he said. "We appreciate very much this Sunshine Policy. We appreciate very much this effort to help North Koreans, to reunite the divided families, to help starving North Koreas," he said. However, the Czech lawmaker expressed his skepticism about the DPRK's desire to develop ballistic missiles, noting that he expects the DPRK leadership to take some actions to alleviate the international community's concerns.

4. DPRK-US Framework Seminar

The Korea Times ("SEOUL TO SEND MISSION TO NK-US FRAMEWORK SEMINAR," Seoul, 04/27/01) reported that the ROK was to send a delegation to a workshop on the 1994 DPRK-US Agreed Framework to be hosted by the Woodrow Wilson International Center, a US public research institute, in Washington on April 30. "The Washington- based institute requested our government's participation in the event. The discussion will address changes in the content of the agreement," a government official said. "We will dispatch our delegates to the seminar to deliver our clear stance that there should be no changes in the accord." The dispatch of the mission is expected to help support James Kelly, assistant U.S. secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, who said in US Senate confirmation hearings Thursday that the Geneva accord seems difficult to change. Delegates will include officials from the Office of Planning for the Light Water Reactor Project and experts from the Foreign Ministry, the official added.

5. DPRK Participation in ADB Meeting

Chosun Ilbo (Lee Ha-won, "US BLOCKS NK FROM ATTENDING ADB MEETING," Seoul, 04/29/01) reported that the US denied the DPRK's request for visas to attend the Asia Development Bank (ADB) meeting that is to be held in Hawaii from May 7-11, an informed source said Sunday. There

was speculation that the denial came even after the ROK government made a request to issue the visas. The source said the US government denied the request because the DPRK is on its list of terrorist- supporting countries. High-ranking ADB officials in Manila said that the DPRK, which applied for full membership in the organization in August last year, wanted to send observers to the Hawaii meeting. When a nation applies for official membership, the ADB generally allows officials from that country to observe its next annual meeting. US International Financial Agency Law requires the US representative to oppose any plans by international financial organizations like the ADB or International Monetary Fund (IMF) to give international recognition or support to terrorist-sponsoring nations. The source said that the DPRK representative at the United Nations had sent an expression of the DPRK's displeasure to the US government. The ROK government also voiced its regret at the decision because it had been actively supporting the DPRK's entry into international organizations such as the ADB.

Joongang Ilbo (Kim Hee-sung, "NORTH KOREA MOST LIKELY TO REMAIN IN THE 'TERROR LIST'," Seoul, 04/30/01) reported that. the DPRK will not be excluded from the US list of terrorism-supporting nations. A well- versed diplomatic source in Washington revealed on Friday that the annual report which the US State Department was expected to submit to President Bush by next week was likely to have the DPRK included on the list of terror- supporting nations. Thomas C. Hubbard, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, himself revealed beforehand that the US has no intention to remove the DPRK from the list.

6. ROK Military Purchases

The Korea Times (Sohn Suk-joo, "KOREA TO SEEK US SHIP TO AIR MISSILE LAUNCHERS," 5/1/01) reported that citing a US defense agency document issued on April 23, the website, www.defense-aerospace.com, said that the ROK requested from the US the sale of three MK41 launchers and other related logistical support elements whose combined cost amounts to some US$98 million. The missile launchers are designed for use with Standard Missile-2 (SM-2) as air defense armaments. Military experts in the ROK raised strong suspicions that despite its repeated denial, the ROK government is bowing to US pressure and has decided to participate in the US-led Theater Missile Defense (TMD) program in Northeast Asia. An ROK Defense Ministry spokesman, however, refuted the claim, saying that the vertical missile launchers cannot be used in the TMD program. He also reaffirmed the ROK's stance on TMD, saying "It is not desirable for Korea to join the TMD, considering our current economic condition, technology and military environment." [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for May 1, 2001.]

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We invite you to reply to today's report, and we welcome commentary or papers for distribution to the network.

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