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CONTENTS

I. United States

1. US Covert Anti-terror War
2. Cross-strait Relations
3. PRC Military Spending
4. PRC Domestic Political Transition
5. ROK Fighter Project

II. Republic of Korea 1. DPRK Illegal Drug Problem
2. ROK–DPRK Relations
3. ROK Air Force Project

III. Japan 1. Mystery Ship Incident
2. US Bases in Okinawa
3. MOX Shipment

I. United States

1. US Covert Anti-terror War

Reuters ("LIEBERMAN: ACTION AGAINST IRAQ MIGHT START SECRETLY," Washington, 03/03/02) reported that Connecticut democratic senator Joseph Lieberman said on Sunday that US action against Iraq might begin without notification to US Congress to allow US President George W. Bush "to employ surprise in attacking or going against the leadership of Iraq." While Lieberman has previously criticized the Bush administration for failing to consult enough with Congress in the ongoing war against terrorism, he made a blunt distinction with regards to Iraq and efforts to overthrow President Saddam Hussein. "I think you have also got to give the commander in chief the right to employ surprise in attacking or in going against the leadership of Iraq. Therefore, it may be that we will not have an actual congressional resolution until after activities or actions have begun in Iraq," Lieberman expressed. Lieberman is one of 10 leading members of Congress who have publicly urged Bush to make Iraq the next target in the US war on terrorism.

2. Cross-strait Relations

Reuters (Jeremy Page, "SPEECH SHOWS CHINA'S ZHU TO CALL FOR DIRECT TAIWAN LINKS," Beijing, 03/05/02) reported that PRC Premier Zhu Rongji is to call for direct trade, transport and postal links with Taiwan in his address to an annual parliament session. Zhu is also set to call for a resumption of dialogue with Taiwan and greater economic, cultural and political exchanges, in his report to the National People's Congress (NPC) on Tuesday. Although Zhu is expected to repeat the "one China" principle as a precondition for negotiations, in another conciliatory gesture, he would define the principle as saying that the mainland and Taiwan are part of a single country -- implying roughly equal status. Even more significantly, Zhu is not expected to repeat the threat to invade Taiwan if the island took steps towards independence or dragged its feet on reunification.

Reuters (Benjamin Kang Lim, "TAIWAN AND CHINA LAUNCH FLURRY OF CONTACTS," Taipei, 03/03/02) reported that while economic and cultural contacts have sprouted between Taiwan and the PRC since US President George W. Bush's Beijing trip, analysts say that prospects for political reconciliation remain dim due. Hsu Szu-chien, an assistant research fellow with the National Chengchi University's Institute of International Relations stated, "We can't jump to the conclusion that cultural and economic progress will lead to political progress. There's still a big gap. I don't think dialogue will resume soon."

3. PRC Military Spending

Reuters (Jeremy Page, "CHINA SAID SET TO ANNOUNCE MORE MILITARY SPENDING BY JEREMY PAGE," Beijing, 03/04/02) reported that the PRC will announce another double-digit rise in its military budget this year analysts and media reports said on Monday. PRC Finance Minister Xiang Huaicheng is expected to propose a 17.6% increase in defense spending to 166 billion yuan (US$20 billion) on Wednesday at a meeting of the National People's Congress (NPC). Last year, the PRC boosted its defense budget by 18% to 141 billion yuan, but analysts say that did not include arms purchases and the real budget could be up to four times higher. "If they follow recent historical trends going back a dozen years or so, we can expect double digit growth in defense spending," said Robert Karniol, Asia- Pacific editor of Jane's Defense Weekly. "But that figure represents only a portion of their real defense expenditure," he added.

4. PRC Domestic Political Transition

Reuters (Jeremy Page, "CHINESE PREMIER AND PARLIAMENT CHIEF TO RETIRE NEXT YEAR," Beijing, 03/04/02) reported PRC spokesperson Zeng Jianhui formally announced that PRC Premier Zhu Rongji and parliament chief Li Peng will step down at next year's session of the National People's Congress (NPC), but the identity of their successors would remain a mystery until after a five-yearly Communist Party congress later this year. Zhu's remarks on the eve of the annual two-week session of the NPC were among the first public comments by a PRC official about the leadership succession process. Zeng also suggested that the party congress at which Zhu, Li and President Jiang Zemin are expected to step down from their party posts would be held in October, rather than September as previously anticipated. He also reiterated that there was no age limit for the president, opening up the possibility that one of the old guard could replace Jiang, who is constitutionally obliged to step down next year. Zeng expressed, "It is still very premature to make any judgements or predictions on those specific leaders," Zeng said. "You will know at that time."

5. ROK Fighter Project

Agence France-Presse ("SOUTH KOREAN FIGHTER PROJECT UNDER ATTACK IN PARLIAMENT," 03/04/02) reported that the ROK defense ministry came under attack in parliament over allegations that it is favoring US giant Boeing for a multi-billion-dollar fighter project. Ruling and opposition lawmakers criticized the ministry Monday as newspaper reports said that the French fighter Rafale had won the highest marks of any of the four contenders in field tests by ROK air force evaluators. The 4.2 trillion won (US$3.2 billion dollar) project to buy 40 fighters was put on hold in February after the prices offered by four bidders were judged too high. Speculation grew last month when Defense Minister Kim Dong- Shin stressed that the ROK should consider security ties with the United States in the project. "The fairness of the evaluation methods is doubtful," Kang Chang-Sung of the opposition Grand National Party told a national assembly committee on Monday. "We suspect the defense ministry has political considerations to select the F-15K." In a statement on Monday, the defense ministry responded that the air force was just one of four evaluations, also including the Defense Procurement Agency, the Korea Institute for Defense Analysis and the Agency for Defense Development.

II. Republic of Korea

1. DPRK Illegal Drug Problem

Joongang Ilbo ("NORTH BAY BE TIED TO DRUGS, U.S. SAYS," Washington, 03/04/02) reported that the US State Department on Friday reported the DPRK as a country of concern in regard to the production or and smuggling of illicit drugs. The department's "International Narcotics Control Strategy Report" said that few narcotics seizures with a clear DPRK connection have been found. It added, however, "Most observers continued to view narcotics coming from North Korea as a significant problem for Japan and Taiwan." The report continued, "Allegations of state complicity in the illicit narcotics trade and other criminal enterprises by North Korea remain a profound concern." It also said that it was possible that the DPRK government "has chosen to sponsor illegal activities as a matter of state policy."

2. ROK–DPRK Relations

Joongang Ilbo (Lee Young-jong, "INTER-KOREAN DIALOGUE COULD REMAIN DERAILED," Mount Kumgang, 03/04/02) reported that Ho Hyok-phil, vice chair of the DPRK Council for Reconciliation and Cooperation, said Thursday that reopening government-to-government dialogue with the ROK will not be easy because of the state of US-DPRK relations. A group of DPRK citizens, led by Ho, bid farewell to ROK delegates who had gone to DPRK for a celebration of the new lunar year. The DPRK cancelled the celebration on Wednesday in protest after the ROK barred some activists from participating. Whether the DPRK still plans to invite ROK citizens for the Arirang Festival beginning April 29 is up in the air, Ho said. "The festival is organized by art and sports groups in the North. We will notify Seoul of our proposal for inviting South Koreans in the near future."

3. ROK Air Force Project

Korea Herald (Hwang Jang-jin, "DASSAULT TOPS INITIAL EVALUATION IN F-X PROJECT," Seoul, 03/04/02) reported that French aircraft maker Dassault Aviation, one of four bidders competing for the nation's fighter jet procurement project, won the highest marks in the Air Force initial field tests last year, ROK officials said Sunday. According to their report, Dassault beat its three rivals, including Boeing of the US, in the Air Force's on-the-spot evaluations of the bidders. Dassault's

combat aircraft Rafale was rated as "excellent" in all five categories, while its strongest rival, Boeing's F-15 fighter, was marked "excellent" in only two categories. Dassault also offered more generous terms with regards to technology transfer and subcontracts for the local ROK aerospace industry than its key competitor, other military sources said. The final selection of a successful bidder will be announced in mid- April after approval by President Kim Dae-jung.

III. Japan

1. Mystery Ship Incident

The Asahi Shimbun ("SHIP SNAPPED IN CHINA SIMILAR TO MYSTERY SHIP," Tokyo, 03/02-3/02) and The Japan Times ("U.S. PHOTOS SHOW MYSTERY SHIP LOOK-ALIKE," Tokyo, 03/02/02) reported that the US has supplied Japan with satellite photos showing a vessel at a PRC military port that appears very similar to the mystery ship that sank in the East China Sea in December. The satellite photos show the ship docked in the naval section of Zhoushan Port which is about 100 kilometers south of Shanghai. However, one government source said that it was "100 percent certain" that the mystery ship had not visited the PRC port. Cabinet ministers declined comment on the news. "We, as the government, have not confirmed such a report. We will not make any further comments on this issue, including whether or not we have concrete information regarding this," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda told a regular news conference Friday. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi when asked about the satellite information responded, "There is various information, including some that we should not talk about."

2. US Bases in Okinawa

Kyodo ("U.S. RETURNING OKINAWA FACILITY," Tokyo, 03/02/02) reported that the US agreed Friday to return most of the land currently used by the US military for its Senaha Communication Station in Okinawa to Japan, officials said.

3. MOX Shipment

Reuters ("CONTROVERSIAL KEPCO MOX TO BE SHIPPED BACK TO U.K.," London, 03/01/02) reported that Japan will ship a controversial batch of nuclear fuel back to Britain under armed escort later this year, two years after rejecting it when British Nuclear Fuels (BNFL) admitted faking quality control data, the British company said Wednesday. "We expect the shipment to take place later this year, but there is no specific date at the present," a spokesperson for the BNFL said. The planned trip drew immediate fire from Greenpeace.

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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