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I. United States

1. Global Nuclear Material

Reuters (Andrew Quinn, "DATA SHOWS WORLD AWASH IN STOLEN NUCLEAR MATERIAL," San Francisco, 03/06/02) reported international researchers have compiled what they say is the world's most complete database of lost, stolen and misplaced nuclear material -- depicting a world awash in weapons-grade uranium and plutonium that nobody can account for. "It truly is frightening," Lyudmila Zaitseva, a visiting fellow at Stanford University's Institute for International Studies, said on Wednesday. "I think this is the tip of the iceberg." Zaitseva also stated that over the past 10 years, at least 88 pounds (40 kg) of weapons-usable uranium and plutonium had been stolen from poorly protected nuclear facilities in the former Soviet Union. While most of this material subsequently was retrieved, at least 4.4 pounds (2 kg) of highly enriched uranium stolen from a reactor in Georgia remains missing. Other thefts have included several fuel rods that disappeared from a research reactor in the Congo in the mid-1990s. While one of these fuel rods later resurfaced in Italy -- reportedly in the hands of the Mafia -- the other has not been found. "We can only guess by the routes where the material is going. We can't say for sure if it is Iraq, Iran, North Korea, al Qaeda or Hezbollah. We can only make assumptions." She added that the dangers of an unsupervised,

underground market in nuclear material were likely to grow, noting that a U.S.-sponsored program to secure nuclear components in the former Soviet Union thus far had only locked up about a third of an estimated 600 tons of weapons-usable material. "It's just not protected," she said. "This is hot stuff. If you steal 20 kilograms of that material, you can build a nuclear weapon."

2. PRC Defense Spending

Reuters (Jeremy Page, "CHINA'S FINANCE MINISTER TO PROPOSE DEFENSE BUDGET BOOST," Beijing, 03/05/02) reported that PRC's finance minister Xiang Huaicheng will propose a 17.6% increase in the military budget this year to pay for salary rises and prepare for high-technology warfare to the National People's Congress on Wednesday. Xiang plans to boost PRC defense spending by 25.2 billion yuan (US$3 billion) in 2002. "We are appropriately increasing expenditures for national defence to raise our army's defence and combat capabilities to safeguard our national sovereignty and territorial integrity and adapt to shifts in the global situation in light of changes in modern technology, especially high technology," Xiang says. "We also need to appropriately raise the salaries of officers, enlisted men and women and office staff," he adds. Last year, the PRC raised its defence budget by 18% to 141 billion yuan, although analysts say that did not include arms purchases and the real budget could be up to four times higher.

3. Taiwan-US Defense "Summit"

Reuters (Alice Hung, "TAIWAN MINISTER TO ATTEND 'DEFENSE SUMMIT,'" Taipei, 03/06/02) reported that Taiwan defense minister Tang Yiau-ming is scheduled to fly to the US on Friday to attend a private "defense summit." Tang would take part in the closed-door meeting in Florida from March 10-12. "He will be the first defence minister to visit the United States in an official capacity in 23 years," a Taiwan military spokesperson said on Wednesday. Senior Taiwan officials had previously been forced to describe their US trips as private or "transit" due to pressure from the PRC. The US has yet to issue Tang a visa, but no glitches were expected. The meeting is being organized by the US-Taiwan Business Council. The meeting has been touted as the first in a possible series of such events now that Bush has ended the annual review of Taiwan's multibillion-dollar weapons shopping list. Tang is expected to meet with US defense officials, including Deputy Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, who is expected to address the conference. Tang has denied he would discuss arms deals.

4. PRC Annual Session of National Parliament

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA FM PLEDGES 'CONSTRUCTIVE' RELATIONS WITH US," 03/06/02) reported that at the annual session of the national parliament, PRC foreign minister Tang Jiaxuan pledged to expand "constructive and cooperative" relations with the US. "We are ready to work together with the US side to narrow differences, expand common ground, increase exchanges and promote cooperation in order to further push forward the constructive and cooperative ties," Tang told journalists on Wednesday at a press conference on the sidelines of the current full session of parliament.

Agence France-Presse ("CHINESE PREMIER WARNS OF "ARDUOUS" YEAR AHEAD AS PARLIAMENT OPENS," 03/06/02) reported that PRC Premier Zhu Rongji opened the annual session of the national parliament by warning of an "arduous" year ahead as the global economic slowdown and the PRC's entry to the WTO take their toll. Zhu's address listed a wide range of problems facing his government -- from economic woes to ethnic separatism and corruption. "This year, the work of

the government will be quite arduous, and the responsibilities we shoulder are important and glorious," Zhu told the 3,000 delegates of the National People's Congress (NPC) on Tuesday. Zhu also expressed that the PRC has emerged with new clout as a member of the global anti-terrorism coalition, and "Amid the changes in international relations, China's diplomatic work has entered a new stage and its international status and influence continue to rise," he said.

5. ROK Fighter Jet Bidding

Agence France-Presse ("SOUTH KOREA INVESTIGATES FIGHTER CONTRACT BIDDERS," 03/06/02) reported that ROK military intelligence is investigating local agents of US and French contenders for a major fighter jet contract. ROK firms representing Boeing of the US and Dassault Aviation SA of France are under investigation after the publication of "military secrets" linked to the deal, an ROK spokesperson for the Defence Security Command (DSC) said Wednesday. "The investigation focused on the agents which have been mentioned by newspapers in connection with the leak of classified documents. Boeing's agent was probed and we also probed Dassault's agent but not Dassault itself. So far we have not investigated any foreign company," the spokesperson said. "We have a duty to conduct a security check into a trading agent for Dassault because military secrets were leaked. We are investigating how our secrets were leaked maybe by military or other sources."

II. Republic of Korea

1. ROK Human Rights Situation

Joongang Ilbo (Ser Myo-ja, "SEOUL'S RIGHTS ABUSE LISTED IN US REPORT," Seoul, 03/06/02) reported that a report released by the US State Department Monday highlighted what it called human rights abuses in ROK. It cited indirect government pressure on the press, human trafficking and infringement upon civil liberties under the National Security Law. This year's report concludes that the ROK government "generally respects the human rights of its citizens," but it added, "Problems remain in some areas, despite some improvements." It listed women's issues, domestic violence, rape, child abuse and workers' rights, as well as legal and societal discrimination against ethnic minorities. The report also pointed out that detainees sometimes suffer from physical and verbal abuse by the police. It praised such steps as establishing the Ministry of Gender Equality in January 2001 and the National Human Rights Commission in April. The report said that the DPRK regime "continued to commit numerous serious abuses." The DPRK report was based on information from human rights monitors, foreign governments and journalists.

2. ROK-US Relations

Joongang Ilbo ("VISIT BY RUMSFELD IS PUT OFF UNTIL APRIL," Seoul, 03/06/02) reported that US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld will postpone his planned visit to Seoul, originally scheduled for the end of this month. "Mr. Rumsfeld put off his visit because of the recent deaths of American soldiers in Afghanistan and the selection of the ROK's next generation fighter jet project," said a source from the US Forces Korea. "The visit may be postponed until after the selection is made in mid April." The ROK had urged that the US schedule the visit after mid-April in order to avoid any appearance of influence on the selection.

3. ROK Air Force Project

The Korea Times (Sohn Suk-joo, "BOEING ALSO QUESTIONED OVER F-X DATA LEAK," Seoul, 03/06/02) reported that in the wake of the ROK military's investigation of leaked military secrets, Boeing confirmed Tuesday that the ROK military had also talked to its local agents. "Only early this morning, I was informed that a team of Korean military investigators questioned Boeing's local agents at Wooil," Arthur Park, director of communications for Boeing Korea, told The Korea Times. But he expressed confidence that Boeing's agents had nothing to do with the leak of the 424-page classified defense document prepared by the Air Force. "We conducted an investigation not only of Dassault's agents but also of Boeing's agents to find out how our secrets were leaked," said DSC spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Ahn Sung-kyong.

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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