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I. United States

1. DPRK Ballistic Missile Development

The Los Angeles Times (Barbara Demicks, "N. KOREA MAY HAVE A MISSILE THAT CAN HIT GUAM," Seoul, 05/06/04) reported that the DPRK is preparing to deploy a newly developed ballistic missile that has a range sufficient to reach US bases in Guam and possibly Hawaii, ROK newspapers reported this week. The DPRK has been trying for years to develop ballistic missiles that could reach the US, but it has been widely assumed that such missiles were in the developmental stage. If the reports are confirmed, they would be an alarming development given that the DPRK is also pursuing nuclear technology. The reports cited unnamed ROK officials saying that intelligence satellites had recently collected evidence of two missile bases under construction in the DPRK. Missiles and mobile launching pads observed at the sites were said to be of a design that did not resemble the DPRK's better-known Rodong missiles. "We presume these bases to be for a new kind of ballistic missiles - not Rodongs or Scuds," a high-ranking ROK official was quoted as telling the Chosun Ilbo, a conservative daily newspaper that broke the story. The official told the newspaper that the missile was likely to have a range of 1,800 to 2,500 miles, making it capable of reaching key Pacific bases in Guam and Okinawa. And because the missile can be launched from a craft, it might be able to reach Hawaii. "I believe this is an entirely new missile," said Kim Tae Woo, an expert on the DPRK military

at the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses in Seoul. He said there was no evidence that the DPRK had test-fired the missile. But he said the building of bases suggested that the government was confident enough in the missile's accuracy to prepare to deploy it, and that it was no longer in the developmental stage.

Agence France-Presse ("NORTH KOREA SET TO TEST NEW MISSILE ENGINES," Seoul, 05/06/04) reported that the US has stepped up surveillance over the DPRK (news - web sites) as the DPRK is set to test engines for a ballistic missile capable of hitting US territory, a newspaper reported here. The DPRK has restored facilities for missile engine testing destroyed by an explosion in December 2002, the JoongAng newspaper said, citing ROK diplomatic and defense sources. The 6,000-kilometer (3,600-mile) range would bring Hawaii, Alaska and the western fringes of the US within the missile's scope, it said. The US and ROK stepped up surveillance following intelligence reports that the DPRK resumed the development of Taepodong-2 missiles, the newspaper said.

2. DPRK-ROK Cabinet-Level Talks

The Associated Press ("N, S KOREA TALKS BOGGED DOWN BY MILITARY ISSUES," Seoul, 05/06/04) reported that cabinet-level negotiations between the DPRK and the ROK bogged down Thursday over the DPRK's insistence that its southern neighbor halt military exercises with the US. The ROK rejected the demand, saying the joint exercises should not be discussed at the inter-Korean talks being held for a second day in Pyongyang. Instead, it urged the DPRK to agree to high-level military talks later this month. The ROK hopes to open such talks to discuss ways of avoiding naval clashes that sometimes occur along the poorly marked western sea border as fishing boats jostle for position during crab-catching season in May and June. The two sides had already agreed to military talks, but failed to fix a date. Wednesday, the DPRK said the military talks can open if theROK halts routine military exercises with the US. The DPRK's chief negotiator, Kwon Ho Ung, "elaborated that the joint military exercises the south side stages with the US are a main factor of straining the overall situation on the Korean peninsula and jeopardizing inter-Korean relations," Korean Central News Agency reported. The two sides held working-level talks Thursday, according to pool reports filed by ROK journalists. The talks are scheduled to end Friday.

Korea Times ("SEOUL PROPOSES ESTABLISHMENT OF S-N LIAISON OFFICES," Pyongyang, 05/06/04) reported that the ROK on Thursday proposed setting up permanent liaison offices during the 14th inter-Korean Cabinet-level talks in Pyongyang. During the marathon meeting on the third day of the four-day negotiations, Seoul's negotiators proposed the establishment of liaison offices in Seoul and Pyongyang to bring about a new level of rapprochement. The ROK's five-member team, headed by Unification Minister Jeong Se-hyun, also suggested that the 10th round of reunions for families split by the 1950-53 Korean War be held around June 15 in commemoration of the fourth anniversary of the landmark 2000 inter-Korean summit. Their counterparts from the DPRK, led by Pyongyang's cabinet member Kwon Ho-ung, gave an upbeat response to the ROK's proposals, indicating that in general they shared the ROK's views. The two sides were close to reaching an agreement on providing full support to civilian-level contacts and cooperative economic projects on the basis of mutual understanding and respect.

3. DPRK Japan Abduction Developments

Kyodo ("N. KOREA'S KIM CRITICIZED FOR ABDUCTIONS APOLOGY: EXPERT," Washington, 05/06/05) reported that DPRK military hardliners have been critical of leader Kim Jong Il for apologizing to Japan for the abduction of Japanese nationals, a US expert who visited the DPRK in April said in a recent interview with Kyodo News. This makes it difficult for the DPRK leader to make

a decision to break the impasse over the abduction issue with Japan, said Selig Harrison, Asian project director at the Washington-based Center for International Policy. Harrison visited the DPRK on April 22-24 and met DPRK officials.

The Associated Press ("JAPAN WELCOMES PROGRESS IN ABDUCTION TALKS WITH N KOREA," Tokyo, 05/06/04) reported that talks this week between the DPRK and Japan on the DPRK's abduction of Japanese citizens were "significant" - even though they didn't lead to a major breakthrough, Japanese officials said Thursday. Delegates from both countries met in Beijing to address Japan's demands that the DPRK turn over the relatives. The Japanese negotiators on Thursday briefed Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, who refused to comment on media speculation that he will travel to the DPRK if the isolated nation agrees to hand over the relatives. "We think it was significant just to be able to exchange our views," Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda told reporters Thursday. Koizumi said that Japan and the DPRK had in-depth discussions but that he couldn't comment on the details, according to his spokesman, Yu Kameoka. However, Kyodo News agency reported Koizumi said the two sides discussed details on how to achieve the return of the abductees' eight relatives still in Pyongyang.

4. ROK Iraq Troops

Korea Herald ("IRAQ TROOPS DISPATCH MAY BY DELAYED," 05/07/04) reported that ROK troops will not leave for Iraq until after June since the government has not received any response from leaders of a northern Iraqi city where the deployment is planned. The government has reportedly chosen Irbil as a tentative site for the troops and planned to announce a final decision after it consulted local Iraqi leaders. The ROK has promised to send 3,600 troops to Irbil or Sulaimaniyah in the Kurdish autonomous region of northern Iraq no later than June, in response to a US request. "We have yet to receive official confirmation from the Kurdish leaders," said Col. Kim Jong-chan, from the spokesman's office at the Defense Ministry. The government's National Security Council, which was expected to announce a final decision on the site for the soldiers, cancelled its meeting yesterday. "The ministry has yet to receive answers from local leaders on whether they sanction Korea's stay in the region and authorize the use of airport facilities," Kim said. Officials predicted that once the NSC made a final decision, it would take more than 45 days to transfer needed military supplies.

5. US-Japan Anti-Missile Test

Xinhua ("JAPAN, US MULL ANTI-MISSILE TEST IN 2005," Tokyo, 05/06/04) reported that Japan and the US have basically agreed to conduct their first joint flight test in the second half of 2005 for sea-based missile interceptors, Kyodo News reported Thursday. Japan is expected to introduce from the US the ground-based PAC-3 and sea-based SM-3 anti-ballistic missile systems at the cost of billions of US dollars. The test would be conducted off Hawaii, Kyodo quoted US Defense Department sources as saying. Aboard the missile would be four jointly developed components --an infrared sensor, propulsion equipment for the second part of the three-stage interceptor missile, a warhead and a nose cone to protect the sensor and warhead, it reported. The two countries are seeking to conduct their second joint flight test in the second half of 2006, Kyodo said.

6. DPRK Train Blast Victims

Reuters ("NORTH KOREA TRAIN BLAST HITS 170," Seoul, 05/06/04) reported that the death toll from last month's train explosion in the DPRK has risen from 161 to 170 but is now unlikely to increase much more, says an international aid official who toured the site. With relief efforts being

carried out by hand while machinery sent in as aid stands idle, it was unclear if relief goods and emergency supplies from the ROK were reaching residents of the shattered town of Ryongchon, Tony Banbury, regional director of the World Food Programme, told reporters in Seoul. The comment came amid suspicions in the ROK about whether relief supplies were reaching the site, in the northwest of the DPRK, quickly enough to be used in the relief effort. DPRK officials had given the fresh death toll in the April 22 explosion but had no more details, Banbury said.

7. US Treasury Northeast Asia Visit

Agence France-Presse ("US TREASURY UNDER SECRETARY TO VISIT CHINA, JAPAN, SOUTH KOREA," Washington, 05/06/04) reported that US Treasury Undersecretary for International Affairs, John Taylor, will travel to the PRC, Japan and the ROK May 10-16, for talks on global and regional economic issues, officials said. A Treasury Department statement said Taylor would be joined in Beijing by Paul Speltz, recently named by Treasury Secretary John Snow as his personal emissary to the PRC on economic and financial relations between the nations. Taylor and Speltz will meet with senior PRC officials May 10-11 on the economy, financial liberalization, the banking system, and issues related to the PRC's currency. Taylor will be in Japan on May 12-14 for talks with officials from Japan's Ministry of Finance and the Bank of Japan, with particular attention to Japan's efforts to end deflation and to shore up the banking system. On May 14, Taylor will travel to Jeju, ROK to participate in the annual meetings of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and will hold a number of bilateral discussions with countries from the region.

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