

NAPSNet Daily Report 09 April, 2004

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report 09 April, 2004", NAPSNet Daily Report, April 09, 2004,
<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-09-april-2004/>

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I. **United States**

1. Japan's Response to Iraq Abductions

Financial Times ("JAPAN'S PRIME MINISTER STANDS FIRM ON IRAQ," 04/09/04) reported that Junichiro Koizumi, Japan's prime minister, on Friday faced the severest test of his decision to send troops to Iraq as his government sought support for the rescue of three citizens kidnapped by a militia group. The Japanese government said on Friday it had appealed to several coalition allies and Coalition Provisional Authority to assist in the rescue of the Japanese nationals, after ruling out withdrawing its Self-Defence Forces from Iraq. "The top priority is to rescue the three," Koizumi said. "We will not bow to any despicable threat by terrorists." The kidnapping of the three Japanese citizens - Soichiro Koriyama, a freelance photographer, Noriaki Imai, a high-school graduate and Nahoko Takato, a volunteer worker - has shaken the Japanese public. Their plight threatens to undermine support for Koizumi's government, particularly if it fails to secure their release before the

Sunday deadline set by the Saraya al-Mujahideen. The group has said it would burn the three hostages to death if Japan refused to withdraw its troops.

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO STAND FIRM AGAINST IRAQI KIDNAPPERS: ANALYSTS," 02/09/04) reported that Japan has no choice but to stand firm against militants who kidnapped Japanese nationals in Iraq to force Tokyo to withdraw its troops, analysts say, predicting a grim outcome for the captives. "Japan made its decision to dispatch its troops to Iraq, knowing it comes with risks. If Japan gives in to threats, both extremists and international society will think Japan is soft on terrorism," said Mataka Kamiya, professor of security at the National Defense Academy. "The withdrawal of troops would surely invite terrorists to make other demands against Japan by holding hostages. Japan's image as a nation state is at stake," he said.

Agence France-Presse ("HUNDREDS STAGE RALLY AGAINST JAPAN'S DECISION TO KEEP TROOPS IN IRAQ," 04/09/04) reported that some 600 people have staged a demonstration in Tokyo, calling for the immediate withdrawal of troops as demanded by militants in Iraq, who are holding three Japanese nationals hostage. The rally was held near the Cabinet Office and the Diet building following reports that the three were taken hostage in Iraq by an armed group which threatened to kill them unless Japanese troops were pulled out within three days. Demonstrators handed over a letter to an official of the Cabinet Office, calling on Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to pull Japanese troops out of Iraq and take responsibility for the crisis. "You should take responsibility for following the Bush administration as you are fully aware that the dispatch of the Self-Defence Forces will hurt both Japanese and Iraqi people," the letter said. The protestors carried banners reading: "Bring them home now, Koizumi. Why don't you go to Iraq instead of the three hostages?" The previously unknown "Mujahedeen Brigades," threatened in a statement Thursday that the three would be "burned alive" unless Japanese troops were pulled out, according to the Qatar-based Al-Jazeera satellite channel. "Is reconstruction support more important than the life of Japanese people?" said Sou Kinoshita, a 21-year-old member of a citizens' group, who joined the demonstration. "It is negligence of the prime minister's duty to feed the victims' lives to the lion," Kinoshita said. "We will continue making our demand for the (troop) withdrawal." Japan, a close ally of the US, has deployed some 550 ground troops to Samawa in predominantly Shiite southern Iraq to provide clean water, medical assistance and repair schools.

2. US-ROK-Japan on DPRK Working Groups

Reuters ("US WANTS NORTH KOREA WORKING GROUP TALKS IN APRIL," Washington, 04/09/04) reported that US, Japanese and ROK officials want the first round of six-way "working- level" talks on ending the DPRK's nuclear ambitions to be held this month, the US State Department said on Friday. Officials from the three nations met in San Francisco this week to discuss how to persuade the DPRK to abandon its suspected nuclear weapons programs, which the US regards as a threat to its allies in the region. The latest talks between the US, Japanese and ROK took place on Wednesday and Thursday. "They concluded that the six-party working group should be convened as soon as possible and ideally by the end of the month," State Department spokesman Adam Ereli said, saying broader six-way talks should be held by the end of June.

3. DPRK-US Relations

Agence France-Presse ("NORTH KOREA SAYS STANDOFF WITH US AT 'BRINK OF NUCLEAR WAR,'" 04/09/04) reported that the DPRK said Friday the standoff over its atomic ambitions was on the brink of nuclear war as US Vice President Dick Cheney headed to the region for talks with key Asian allies. The DPRK's official news agency accused the US of "driving the military situation on the

Korean peninsula to the brink of a nuclear war" with plans for a pre-emptive strike on the DPRK. The DPRK described six-party talks held in Beijing in February as "fruitless," their harshest assessment so far of the meeting.

4. US Cheney Asia Visit

Agence France-Presse ("CHENEY HEADS FOR ASIA TO REASSURE KEY ALLIES JAPAN, SKOREA ON IRAQ," 04/10/04) reported that US Vice President Dick Cheney headed for Asia, where he is expected to urge key allies Japan and South Korea to stay the course on Iraq despite security fears stemming from abductions in the war-torn nation. A senior administration official, speaking ahead of the week-long trip, indicated that Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and ROK leaders might raise with Cheney their concerns over the abduction of their citizens in Iraq. "The unfortunate developments, ... the kidnapping of the Korean and Japanese citizens, I expect to be very much on their minds," the official said. Three Japanese have been captured in Iraq, while seven South Koreans were taken hostage only to be released unharmed Thursday amid some of the fiercest fighting between insurgents and US-led forces since Baghdad fell a year ago. The gunmen have threatened to burn the three Japanese hostages alive unless Tokyo pulls its troops out of Iraq. Koizumi has vowed he would not give in to their demand. "It's a classic case, I think, of those who are opposed to what we're trying to do in Iraq trying to change the behavior of governments through terror, intimidation (and) the threat of violence against citizens of those governments," the US official said. "It's important that those of us who are working on this overall effort not allow that to happen," he said. Japan has deployed

The Associated Press (H. Josef Herbet, "CHENEY TO PROMOTE NUKE REACTORS TO CHINA," Washington, 04/09/04) reported that on a trip to the PRC next week to talk about the DPRK, Vice President Dick Cheney will have another task - making a pitch for Westinghouse's US nuclear power technology. At stake could be billions of dollars in business in coming years and thousands of American jobs. The initial installment of four reactors, costing \$1.5 billion apiece, would also help narrow the huge US trade deficit with the PRC. The PRC's latest economic plan anticipates more than doubling its electricity output by 2020 and the PRC government, facing enormous air pollution problems, is looking to shift some of that away from coal-burning plants. Its plan calls for building as many as 32 large 1,000-megawatt reactors over the next 16 years. No one has ordered a new nuclear power reactor in the US in three decades and the next one, if it comes, is still years away. So, the PRC is being viewed by the US industry as a potential bonanza. Cheney's three-day visit to Beijing and Shanghai next week is part of a weeklong trip to Asia that will also include a stop in Tokyo.

5. ROK Presidential Impeachment Hearing

Agence France-Presse ("ROK CONSTITUTIONAL COURT STREAMLINES IMPEACHMENT REVIEW," 04/09/04) reported that the ROK's Constitutional Court said it will hear testimony from four witnesses in a streamlined review of the unprecedented impeachment of President Roh Moo-Hyun. The court put off a decision on whether to call Roh himself to the stand during its 40-minute session, its third public hearing. Roh was suspended from office on March 12 when two opposition parties voted to impeach him on charges of violating electoral neutrality, incompetence, and corruption. Counsel prosecuting the case for the opposition asked to call 29 people to testify. The nine-justice court which has 180 days to rule on the case said it would hear testimony from just four, including three former aides to Roh who have been prosecuted on corruption charges. Roh's legal team have advised the president against appearing, saying it would encourage political attacks rather than legal debate. But the prosecution insists that Roh must appear in person. "There is no

change in our stance that President Roh himself must appear at the court to give live testimony," a prosecutor said after the hearing

Yonhap News ("ROH'S AIDES TO TESTIFY AT IMPEACHMENT HEARING," Seoul, 04/09/04) reported that the Constitutional Court decided Friday to call three confidants to President Roh Moo-hyun as witnesses in the ongoing public hearing on his impeachment. They include two former Cheong Wa Dae officials, Choi Do-sul and Yeo Taek-soo, and Ahn Hee-jung, who helped Roh win the nomination of the then ruling Millennium Democratic Party in 2002. The court also called Shin Dong-in, president of Lotte Shopping, as a witness. Shin is accused of having played the role of middleman between Lotte Group and Roh's aides, who allegedly received illegal funding from the business group ahead of the 2002 presidential election. Prosecutors plan to question Choi and Ahn before the nine-judge panel on April 20, and Yeo and Shin on April 23. The court also plans to review the records of state prosecutors' investigation into several of Roh's aides, indicating that the focus of the hearing is shifting from Roh's election law violation to charges to corruption. In addition, the court requested prosecutors to submit economic data in a bid to determine whether Roh is responsible for the economic slowdown as opposition lawmakers claim. The judges, however, resisted the prosecutors' demand for face-to-face questioning of Roh.

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7. ROK Iraq Troop Dispatch

Agence France-Presse ("SOUTH KOREA TO GO AHEAD WITH IRAQ TROOP DISPATCH PLAN," 04/09/04) reported that the ROK said that thousands of ROK troops would go to Iraq as planned despite security fears triggered by a spate of kidnappings in the war-torn country. Concern over the safety of the troops, mostly non-combatants, has prompted calls for the ROK to scrap the deployment as Iraq becomes an issue in the run up to parliamentary elections here on April 15. "I have nothing to add to what the government has so far been saying about the troop dispatch," Foreign Minister Ban Ki-Moon told reporters Friday, referring to statements made earlier this week stressing that the ROK would keep to its pledge. Ban said a fact-finding mission would leave for Iraq on schedule later Friday to help choose a location for the ROK contingent of more than 3,000 troops. Defense Minister Cho Young-kil, briefing acting president Goh Keun, said troops would be deployed as planned to one of two destinations in Iraq suggested by the US, according to a press statement. Earlier Friday, the government said it had effectively banned travel by its citizens to Iraq following two incidents in which South Koreans were abducted and later released by Iraqi insurgents. "The government measure effectively means banning Korean citizens from touring Iraq," said Yoon Tai-Young, spokesman for the presidential office.

8. DPRK-US Relations

Agence France-Presse ("NORTH KOREA SAYS STANDOFF WITH US AT 'BRINK OF NUCLEAR WAR,'" 04/09/04) reported that the DPRK said Friday the standoff over its atomic ambitions was on the brink of nuclear war as US Vice President Dick Cheney headed to the region for talks with key Asian allies. The DPRK's official news agency accused the US of "driving the military situation on the Korean peninsula to the brink of a nuclear war" with plans for a pre-emptive strike on the DPRK. The DPRK described six-party talks held in Beijing in February as "fruitless," their harshest assessment so far of the meeting.

9. DPRK Food Economy

Korea Times ("NORTH KOREA SCRAPS FOOD RATIONING," 04/09/04) reported that the DPRK has completely abolished its system of food rationing as part of broad-based economic reform, Yonhap reported quoting a diplomatic source in Seoul Thursday. "I understand North Korea has recently abolished the remaining 50 percent of food rationing, making individuals provide for themselves when it comes to food," the source, asking to remain anonymous, was quoted as saying. Since the DPRK enacted a package of macroeconomic policy changes on July 1, 2002, it kept part of the food rationing system intact, making North Koreans buy 50 percent of their food in the market. "The DPRK has phased out the food rationing system since July 1, and only a privileged few, including ranking Workers' Party members, are still subject to the system," the source said. The abolition of rationing comes at a time when DPRK experts say the authorities have decided to lease land to individuals starting from March 1.

10. DPRK Trade Minister Appointment

The Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA NAMES NEW TRADE MINISTER," Seoul, 04/09/04) reported that the DPRK has replaced its trade minister as the impoverished communist country appeared to bring younger economic technocrats into its Cabinet, officials said Friday. New Trade Minister Rim Kyong Man replaced Ri Kwang Keun, who has served in the post for three years. Rim's new title was revealed in official DPRK news reports Thursday, officials said. Rim has worked in his ministry since the mid-1970s. Little other information about Rim was available. The DPRK has replaced more than a third of its 34 Cabinet-level ministers since last year. "It appears that North Korea is bringing

younger economic technocrats into its Cabinet," said Na Chong-chul, an analyst at Seoul's Unification Ministry. "But it's too early to say this is a definitive trend."

11. US-DPRK Joint Recovery Teams

Yonhap News ("EQUIPMENT FOR US SOLDIERS' REMAINS TO BE SENT TO NORTH VIA DMZ," Seoul, 04/09/04) reported that equipment to be used for recovering remains believed to be those of American soldiers missing in action from the 1950-53 Korean War will likely be sent through the heavily-fortified border with the DPRK next week, military sources said Friday. It will be the first time for such equipment to be sent through the truce village of Panmunjom in the Demilitarized Zone. Up to now, excavation equipment has been flown in.

12. US Missile Error

The BBC ("'MISSILE ERROR' LED TO RAF DEATHS," 04/09/04) reported known faults in the US Army's Patriot missile system may have caused an RAF plane to be accidentally shot down in Iraq last year that caused two RAF airmen died in the Patriot missile 'friendly fire' incident. The US originally suggested a problem with the Tornado aircraft itself led to the friendly fire incident near Kuwait. But Radio 4's Today program has uncovered evidence that the US unit which fired the missile knew there was an error in the Patriot system. RAF findings on how the two airmen died have not been made public. An RAF report on the March 2003 incident is believed to have been forwarded to the Ministry of Defense but the MoD says it cannot comment until the report is finalized. Journalist The two airmen killed - Flight Lieutenant David Rhys Williams and Flight Lieutenant Kevin Barry Main - both served with 9 Squadron, RAF Marham.

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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