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I. Republic of Korea

1. Bilateral or Multilateral with DPRK?

Joongang Ilbo (Kim Young-sae, "US, NORTH WON'T BUDGE ON DIALOGUE," Seoul, 03/11/03) reported that DPRK and US continued to say over the weekend that they want to talk, but remain poles apart on how. Appearing on US television over the weekend, US Secretary of State Colin Powell said, "I think eventually we will be talking to North Korea." But he called demands by DPRK for bilateral talks "a bad practice" that US would not agree to. He said other nations in the region are affected by DPRK's nuclear program and deserve a seat at the table. DPRK repeated its demand for bilateral talks Monday, something it said was a demand of the international community and the US Congress. "If the United States truly wants to resolve the nuclear problem on the Korean Peninsula," DPRK's Central News Agency said, "it should withdraw its demand for multilateral dialogue and come to direct talks." ROK officials have reportedly been warming to the idea that the talks should be multilateral, although one official said the exact nature of the framework is still

under discussion. The official said several ideas are being tested with DPRK through diplomatic channels.

2. DPRK's Criticism against Grand National Party

Joongang Ilbo (Ser Myo-ja, "NORTH SAYS PARTY ENVOY OFFERED AID," Seoul, 03/11/03) reported that DPRK said Monday that the Grand National Party had sent a secret envoy to DPRK before last year's presidential election. DPRK said the unnamed party representative had promised generous support if it took control of the Blue House. On its Japanese Web site DPRK's state-run Korean Central News Agency printed a lengthy statement by DPRK's Asia Pacific Peace Committee with that charge, although the bulk of the statement concerned the controversial transfer of $500 million from the Hyundai Group to DPRK. The statement, dated Sunday but released Monday, said ROK conservatives had "absurdly" linked the deal with the June 2000 inter-Korean summit. "Hyundai's cooperation, representing the peculiarities of North-South relations, deserves the nation's appreciation and the issue of remittance to the North should never be subject to legal action," the statement said. A Grand National Party aide seemed unfamiliar with the North's comments about an envoy yesterday evening, but the GNP spokesman, Park Jong-hee, told the JoongAng Daily later that the party flatly denied the allegations. Mr. Park called them "groundless and malicious allegations." DPRK statement challenged the GNP's right to criticize the cash transaction while making accusations about GNP offers of largesse. It said, "Frankly speaking, since long before the emergence of the Kim Dae-jung administration [in 1998], the GNP had suggested high-level contacts to the North through various channels. It even said that if the North accepted its request, it would offer us not only tens of billions of dollars but everything we wanted without any limit to items and the size of the aid." "With the presidential election at hand last year," the statement continued, "the GNP sent a secret envoy to DPRK. He said the GNP would offer DPRK more positive and bigger aid than what the [Kim Dae-jung] government had given if Lee Hoi-chang were elected." The committee said the envoy had informed DPRK of a shift in its DPRK policy from "absolute reciprocity to flexible reciprocity."

3. ROK Support to Iraq War

Joongang Ilbo ("KOREA SAYS US ASKS FOR IRAQ WAR SUPPORT," Seoul, 03/11/03) reported that US wants ROK's help against Iraq, the Blue House spokeswoman said. Song Kyoung-hee said Monday, "The senior advisor for national security, Ra Jong-yil, reported to the president Tuesday that US has asked for active support. The request is for ROK to declare its support, provide medical support and help with refugees." Maureen Cormak, the US Embassy spokeswoman, said she would not comment on the substance of government-to-government dialogue, but said the subject of ROK support on Iraq had been discussed with ROK over the New Year holiday. Mr. Ra reportedly advised the president that the administration should make a show of support for its ally. He added that US considers DPRK nuclear issue a regional, not a global concern.

4. ROK Labor Representative to Pyeongyang

Joongang Ilbo ("LABOR REPRESENTATIVES LEAVE FOR PYEONGYANG," Seoul, 03/11/03) reported that representatives of the Federation of Korean Trade Unions and the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions left for Pyeongyang Tuesday for a five-day visit. The group of 27 officials will meet with DPRK's Ryom Sun-gil, chairman of the General Federation of Korean Trade Unions in what is being called a labor movement for national reunification. The union groups said they would discuss the implementation of agreements made in the June 2000 joint statement after the first meeting of

leaders of the two countries and how to step up exchanges between DPRK and ROK laborers. The delegation will also try to reach agreement on a May 1 joint Labor Day ceremony, soccer matches, a marathon and exchanges between regional and industry labor unions in the two countries.

5. DPRK's Criticism on ROK's Response to Plane Interception

Chosun Ilbo (Kim Min-cheol, "NORTH WARNS AGAINST SOUTH'S CRITICISM," Seoul, 03/11/03) reported that the Rodong Shinmun, a state-run DPRK daily newspaper, said Monday that DPRK's fighter planes that buzzed a US spy plane last week were carrying out their right to self-defense. It also said ROK's criticism of the interception was outrageous, and likened it to complaining that your brother had kicked a thief out the door. The daily said that the incident would not have occurred if US had not "recklessly asserted its military power by sending the spy planes on patrol." It said that the "thoughtless actions" of ROK would only push inter-Korean relations back to a more contentious state.

II. Japan

1. Japan on War against Iraq

The Asahi Shimbun ("KOIZUMI TO STIR SUPPORT FOR NEW IRAQ RESOLUTION," 03/11/03) reported that the Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi were to start contacting their counterparts around the world late Monday to rally votes for the British-sponsored resolution giving Iraq until March 17 to disarm or face military attack. Koizumi was to speak directly to the US President George W. Bush about the Iraq crisis. Koizumi and Kawaguchi were to make the calls from around midnight through this morning to the leaders and diplomatic representatives of six nonpermanent members of the UN Security Council still undecided about the new resolution. Kawaguchi said in a statement Saturday: "Considering that this draft resolution maintains international solidarity, places the international community's consolidated pressure on Iraq, and makes the final effort to lead Iraq to disarm voluntarily, Japan supports this resolution." One government official said Japan will try to sway undecided nations by dangling offers of official development assistance, a tactic that would likely invite criticism.

The Asahi Shimbun ("INTERVIEW/ Takakazu Kuriyama: U.S. doesn't need U.N. approval to attack Iraq," 03/08/03) reported that Takakazu Kuriyama, who was administrative vice foreign minister during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, says in an interview with The Asahi Shimbun that Japan should support US military action against Iraq even if the UN Security Council does not authorize it. Asked if the Iraqi threat is so pressing that the use of military force is required, he answered, "It is true that the picture is not so clear. But can we leave Iraq alone when it has not complied with UN resolutions for more than 10 years?" Regarding the course Japan should take when the proposal by the US and Britain does not get through the UN Security Council, Kuriyama said, "In that case, the US will resort to coercive action anyway, contending that the UN has abdicated its responsibility for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. Japan should in principle support the US position. [...] The UN Security Council plays an important role. But to say that nothing can be done without its approval is dangerous. The council is not a body designed to dispense justice. [...] (T)here is no guarantee that a just and correct argument prevails all the time as many Japanese seem to think. What will they do when the North Korean threat is taken up by the council in the future?"

2. US Bases in Okinawa

Kyodo ("RESIGNATION OF GINOWAN MAYOR ACCEPTED," Naha, 03/07/03) reported that the Ginowan Municipal Assembly in Okinawa Prefecture on Thursday unanimously accepted Mayor Seiko Higa's resignation following his arrest for allegedly receiving illegal donations in a 2001 election. An election to choose his successor will probably be held April 27 as part of nationwide local elections, with the campaign expected to focus again on the agreed relocation of the US Marine Corps Futenma Air Station in Ginowan. When Higa was running for re-election in 2001, he supported the planned transfer of the base from Ginowan to a planned military-civilian airport in Nago.

3. Japanese Logistic Support in Arabian Sea

The Japan Times ("MSDF SHIP REFUELS FRENCH VESSEL," 03/11/03) reported that a Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) supply ship in the Arabian Sea refueled a French vessel for the first time Sunday as part of its logistic support for US-led anti-terror operations in and around Afghanistan, the MSDF said Monday. The Japanese vessel provided the French ship with about 160 kiloliters of fuel. Refueling vessels from Germany and New Zealand will follow, and Japan is also considering expanding support to about five other countries, the MSDF said. Japan provided support to US and British vessels, including 280,000 kiloliters of fuel oil worth 10.5 billion yen, between December 2001 and late February.

4. Japan-ASEAN Free Trade Area

The Associated Press ("ASEAN, JAPAN DISCUSS POSSIBLE FTA," Kuala Lumpur, 03/11/03) reported that senior officials from Japan and the ASEAN discussed measures Monday to expand economic cooperation, including possibly creating a free-trade area within 10 years. The negotiations in Kuala Lumpur come after the 10-member ASEAN signed a pact during its annual summit in November to begin liberalizing trade and investment with Japan. By 2020, the value of exports from ASEAN to Japan is expected to rise by $20.63 billion, or 44.2 percent, from the base year of 1997, while Japan's exports to ASEAN will increase by $20.02 billion, or 27.5 percent, official estimates say. In their agreement last year, ASEAN and Japan pledged to seek closer ties in finance, tourism, and technology within 10 years and possibly to establish a free-trade area.

4. DPRK Missile Exercise

Kyodo ("N.KOREA FIRES NONBALLISTIC MISSILE IN SEA OF JAPAN," Tokyo, 03/10/03) reported that DPRK fired a ground-to-ship missile Monday in the Sea of Japan but it was not a ballistic missile and is unlikely to pose an immediate threat to regional security, the Japanese Defense Agency said. The missile was fired at around noon from a launch site somewhere around Sinsang, South Hangyong, on DPRK's northeastern coast, the agency said. In Seoul, the ROK Defense Ministry said the missile believed to be the upgraded Silkworm fell into the sea some 110 kilometers from the launch site. It was of the same type that DPRK fired on Feb. 24 in the same area. "It's not an emergency," Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi told a House of Councillors Budget Committee session shortly after the agency announced the missile launch. Defense Agency chief Shigeru Ishiba played down the incident, telling the same committee session that the government does not consider it to be a threat to Japan's national security and peace because it was apparently not directly aimed at Japan. The agency said it has yet to identify the missile but confirmed it was not a ballistic missile. The premier said the government will deal with the series of missile test by closely working with the US and ROK. Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe, a government spokesman, told reporters the missile was fired as part of DPRK's regular military exercises. But the

Rodong Sinmun, the newspaper of DPRK's ruling Workers Party, said Monday the latest missile firing meant something more than a simple military drill, according to the (North) Korean Central News Agency. The news agency quoted the daily as saying that DPRK fired the missile as the US is flying a number of reconnaissance airplanes over the country's military boundaries and the waters near the Korean Peninsula in preparation for a preemptive nuclear attack on DPRK. Ishiba said DPRK had issued a warning to shipping last week to stay out of the area, a warning which is customarily given before a missile launch.

5. Japan-DPRK Relations

The Asahi Shinbun ("JAPAN CONSIDERS SANCTIONS AS NORTH'S PROVOCATIONS ESCALATE," 03/07/03) reported that while no Japanese government official has openly called for economic sanctions to rein in DPRK's dangerous military provocations, discussion of possible sanctions has begun. Japan hopes to maintain a channel of dialogue with DPRK, but aides to Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi say there must be some indication that sanctions are being looked at to prevent even worse behavior by DPRK. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda is one of many top government officials taking a cautious line on sanctions. "Would it be possible to generate adequate results if we were to go ahead with sanctions alone?" Fukuda asked Wednesday. "If sanctions are implemented, it would have to be done with international cooperation. A decision to impose sanctions would depend on what North Korea does." Japan's actions are constrained by its desire to resolve the abduction issue with DPRK, but it cannot ignore the recent series of provocations by Pyongyang. After launching a surface-to-ship missile into the Sea of Japan, DPRK fighters buzzed a US reconnaissance plane over international waters. With this as background, it is not too far-fetched to predict DPRK may soon cross what one government source calls "the red line." Stepping over the red line would involve launching a ballistic missile or resuming operations at a nuclear fuel reprocessing facility. This facility is capable of producing the plutonium necessary for nuclear weapons. High-ranking Foreign Ministry officials said that if the North takes either action, there would be a fundamental shift in the level of danger facing Japan and discussion of economic sanctions would be unavoidable. A number of younger Diet members, including Liberal Democratic Party Upper House member Ichita Yamamoto, have put together a bill that would allow the government to ban entry into Japanese ports of ships from designated nations. This bill along with one to revise the foreign exchange control law to allow for greater control over foreign trade has been presented to LDP executives. These bills would provide some leverage against DPRK by allowing Japan to implement its own economic sanctions, although realistically such sanctions would not be possible without a relevant UN resolution. The increased focus on preparing a "stick" to shove DPRK back in line comes as the possibility of using a "carrot" in the form of rice assistance has all but died out. In late February, Maurice Strong, senior adviser to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, met with Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe and Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi and asked Japan to provide food assistance to Pyongyang. Abe flatly rejected the request.

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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