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I. United States

1. US-Philippines Anti-terror War

Agence France-Presse, "US RISKS DRAWING FIRE FROM OTHER MUSLIM GROUPS IN SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES," 02/11/02) reported that US troops set for joint anti-terror action in the Philippines could face a far larger armed adversary than expected as their Abu Sayyaf quarry is backed by other Muslim guerrilla groups. Up to 160 elite US Special Forces troops are set for deployment in Basilan aimed to help the Filipino forces crush the Abu Sayyaf rebel group. Philippines Brigadier General Edilberto Adan warned Monday that historically larger guerrilla groups have come to the aid of the Abu Sayyaf. There are no more than 300 Abu Sayyaf fighters on the island, but they are "reinforceable by other elements", including units of the 12,500-member Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), Adan explained. There are about 1,000 MILF separatist guerrillas on Basilan as well as about 500 members of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), a second separatist group that signed a peace treaty with Manila in 1996. Many of the ex-rebels had not disarmed, Adan said. "The nature of the Abu Sayyaf group (problem) in Basilan is such there are other armed groups in the area. They could be the MILF who are scattered in the island, who from time to time reinforce the Abu Sayyaf," Adan said. "So while we initially engage 20 (gunmen), after one hour or two hours of firefight we find ourselves engaged with 100."

2. DPRK-US Diplomatic Relations

The Associated Press (Barry Schweid, "POWELL: BUSH, N. KOREA TO HOLD TALKS," Washington, 02/12/02) reported that US President George W. Bush will offer a no-strings-attached dialogue to the DPRK during his trip to Asia next week, and "we hope the North Koreans will take us up on it," Secretary of State Colin Powell said Tuesday. Powell expressed that Bush is "very much looking forward to visiting South Korea to show that the bond between the United States and the South Koreans is as strong as ever. He will talk about North Korea, and he will talk about the hope he has for North Korea that some day the North Korean people will enjoy the kind of life that South Koreans have." At the same time, though, "We will not shrink from pointing out the nature of the North Korean regime," Powell said. "It is a regime that does things that do not benefit its own people. We want dialogue," he said, "but at the same time we not deny the obvious truth as to the nature of that regime."

3. US-DPRK Relations

Reuters (Randall Mikkelsen, "BUSH ISSUES NEW THREAT TO IRAN, IRAQ, N.KOREA," Milwaukee, 02/11/02) reported that US President George W. Bush issued a new warning to Iraq, Iran and the DPRK on Monday, saying the US had a mission to stop nations developing weapons of mass destruction from teaming up with terrorists. At a fund-raising speech for Wisconsin Governor Scott McCallum in Milwaukee Bush declared, "This president is not going to allow regimes such as Iran, Iraq and North Korea to threaten our way of life." In an earlier speech at the Medical College of Wisconsin, he said the US had to "seize the moment". "If we blink, the rest of the world will blink as well," Bush said, calling Afghanistan "the first theater in the war against terror." "I believe we must find terror wherever it hides and bring it to justice," he said.

4. US Domestic View of "Axis of Evil"

The Associated Press (Christopher Newton, "DASCHLE SAYS BUSH WAS WRONG TO USE `AXIS OF EVIL' PHRASE," Washington, 02/12/02) reported that US Senate Majority leader Tom Daschle said that US President Bush was wrong to label Iran, Iraq and the DPRK as an "axis of evil." Daschle expressed, "I think that it's important for us to look at each of these countries as threats to this country, as problems that we've got to address clearly. But I think we've got to be very careful with the rhetoric of that kind. We've already seen the moderates in Iran scramble to draw distance between us and them, and I think we've got to be very careful with how we approach all three countries." White House spokesman Ari Fleischer called Daschle's comments "confusing" given that Daschle could have leveled those criticisms immediately after the State of the Union address but did not. "It seems something has changed in Senator Daschle," Fleischer said. "Perhaps he has had a change of opinion, but it does not appear that he is perfectly consistent."

5. Cross-straits Relations

Reuters ("CHINA TO PUSH FOR TAIWAN DIALOGUE IN NEW LUNAR YEAR," Beijing, 02/11/02) and Agence France-Presse ("CHINESE LEADER PLEDGES RETURN OF TAIWAN IN NEW YEAR SPEECH," 02/11/02) reported that in his annual Chinese Lunar New Year's eve address, PRC Premier Zhu Rongji said on Monday that the PRC would push to resume dialogue with Taiwan in the Year of the Horse, while trying to raise incomes and crack down on corruption. Zhu said, "We will persist in promoting the resumption of cross-Straits dialogue and negotiations on the basis of 'one China' and promote the development of cross-Straits relations." Zhu stated that the PRC regards

Taiwan as a breakaway province which it hopes to reunite peacefully with the mainland, but has said it will invade if the diplomatically isolated island declares independence. "We are resolutely opposed to any attempt to separate Taiwan from our motherland," Zhu said.

6. ROK Train Station

The Associated Press (Ahn Young-Joon, "SOUTH KOREA OPENS TRAIN STATION," Paju, 02/12/02) and Reuters ("SOUTH KOREA APPEALS TO NORTH ON RAIL, FAMILY LINKS," Paju, 02/12/02) reported that the ROK briefly reopened a train station near its border with the DPRK on Tuesday, allowing hundreds of elderly ROK citizens to travel by rail to a stop that had been closed since the 1950-53 Korean War. Many of the 650 passengers have not seen relatives in the DPRK for over half a century. Some wept, bowed in the direction of the North and wrote messages such as "I hope unification comes soon" on the railroad ties at Dorasan Station. Dorasan is the last train stop outside the Demilitarized Zone. The DPRK and the ROK agreed to reconnect the cross-border railway during a historic summit in June 2000, and the ROK hoped to complete the project by last year. But inter-Korean reconciliation projects stalled amid US- DPRK Korean tension that escalated the following year. The railway would reconnect Seoul with Pyongyang, and would be the first direct transport link since the Korean War.

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.
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