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I. United States

1. ROK on US-DPRK Relations

The Associated Press (Soo-Jeong Lee, "SOUTH KOREA WANTS WASHINGTON TO SHOW MORE WILLINGNESS OVER NORTH KOREA," Seoul, 03/12/03) reported that the ROK on Wednesday urged the US and the DPRK to use both direct talks and multilateral channels to resolve the standoff

over the DPRK's nuclear programs. The DPRK has repeatedly said it wants to talk only with the US. But the US prefers to settle the dispute through multilateral pressure, saying the nuclear programs threaten not just US interests but also those of Russia, the PRC, Japan and the ROK. "Our position is the two sides should pursue both ways," Prime Minister Goh Kun said in a speech at a meeting with economic leaders. "Based on this, the (South) Korean government will do its best to settle the problem peacefully in close coordination with the US." Goh's remarks came after the ROK's foreign minister said Wednesday that the US needs to do more to resolve the nuclear dispute. Foreign Minister Yoon Young-kwan said Seoul supports a multilateral approach - but that there should still be bilateral discussions between the US and the DPRK. "Whatever the setting may be, our position is that we would like it if the US showed more willingness to settle substantial issues with North Korea," Yoon said.

2. Russia on US DPRK Threats

The Associated Press ("RUSSIA RESUMES WARNINGS AGAINST THREATENING NORTH KOREA," Moscow, 03/12/03) reported that a senior Russian diplomat warned Wednesday against threatening the DPRK, saying Russia was continuing its quiet diplomacy aimed at reaching a settlement of the crisis around the DPRK's nuclear program. "Russia is definitely against preventive strikes on North Korea and against any military nuclear programs on the Korean peninsula," Deputy Foreign Minister Georgy Mamedov said during a visit to Tokyo, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported. He rejected any sanctions levied against the DPRK because of its nuclear program, saying such punishment would only intensify tensions, ITAR-Tass said. "The country has the possibility to create nuclear weapons, but no evidence, except hints, rumors and indirect information, exists that North Korea has such weapons already," Mamedov said. The Russian diplomat also warned that the chances of the DPRK developing nuclear weapons could increase if a political settlement were not reached in the form of either a bilateral dialogue between the US and the DPRK or a multilateral dialogue.

3. US DPRK Regime Change

The Associated Press (Christopher Torchia, "US COULD END UP PUSHING FOR REGIME CHANGE, AS WELL AS NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT, IN NORTH KOREA," Seoul, 03/12/03) reported that US officials talk freely of regime change in Iraq, but not in the DPRK. US-based analysts, however, say some in the US believe the downfall of the DPRK government is the only path to fully dismantling its nuclear programs. For now, the US goal is to muster diplomatic pressure on the DPRK to give up suspected efforts to develop nuclear weapons, while keeping the issue on the back burner until Iraq is resolved. Both countries are part of what President George W. Bush has called an "axis of evil." If international diplomacy fails with the DPRK, economic containment and even the use of force - strategies now in play against Iraq - could emerge as more viable options to destabilize the rule of Kim Jong Il. White House spokesman Ari Fleischer on Tuesday said U.N. action on Iraq would set an example for the DPRK. "If the United Nations shows North Korea that it passes resolutions it has no meaning to enforce and there is no strength behind, then North Korea will say it does not matter what the United Nations does," he said.

4. DPRK on DPRK-US Direct Talks

The Korean Central News Agency of DPRK ("DPRK-US DIRECT TALKS CALLED FOR," Pyongyang, 03/12/03) reported that the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula is not an issue to be solved through multilateral talks but it is quite possible to find a solution to the issue if the DPRK and the US sit face to face for sincere discussion. Rodong Sinmun Tuesday says this in a signed commentary.

It goes on: The Bush group is insisting on multilateral talks, turning its face from the proposal for DPRK-US direct talks. It asserted that "the nuclear issue is not concerned with the US and North Korea only but an issue affecting Northeast Asia and the whole world." The US much publicized multilateral talks are, in essence, aimed to evade its responsibility for authoring the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula. This issue should be solved between the DPRK and the US it is none other than the US that poses a nuclear threat to the DPRK. If the US turns to a military option in the end, persistently turning down the DPRK principled proposal for direct talks it will lead to a catastrophic situation.

5. US-ROK Military Exercises

The New York Times (Don Kirk, "STEALTH FIGHTERS, AND US MARINES, ON WAY TO SOUTH KOREA," Seoul, 03/12/03) reported that US Stealth fighter planes were flying here today to take part for the first time in seven years in war games with US and ROK forces. At the same a US Navy aircraft carrier steamed toward the ROK to join in the exercises. The US increased its strength around the Korean Peninsula against a background of DPRK threats, concerns about the US military commitment and renewed pleas by ROK officials to ease up the pressure against the DPRK for the sake of reconciliation. The Air Force confirmed that six F-117A Stealth fighters had left Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico and would arrive on Friday at Kunsan Air Base about 200 miles south of here. A spokesman for the US command here said the aircraft carrier Carl Vinson would make a port call at Pusan, on the southeast corner of the Korean Peninsula, and then cruise nearby waters while US marines staged a landing at Pohang, on the east coast. An Air Force spokesman declined to say if the Stealth aircraft, noteworthy for their ability at eluding radar, were coming here to escort US surveillance planes on missions off the DPRK.

6. DPRK Response to ROK-US Exercise

BBC News ("NORTH KOREA ANGRY AT US DEPLOYMENT," 03/12/03) and Agence France-Presse ("NORTH KOREA REACTS ANGRILY TO US AIRCRAFT CARRIER DEPLOYMENT," 03/12/03) reported that the DPRK reacted angrily to a US decision to deploy an aircraft carrier in waters around the Korean peninsula as part of the ongoing joint military drills with the ROK. Through the state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), the DPRK said the presence of the carrier would make the nuclear crisis even more volatile in the region. The DPRK has condemned the annual US-ROK war games, codenamed Foal Eagle, which began last week, as a rehearsal for an US strike at its nuclear facilities. "The 'Foal Eagle' joint military exercise is at its height with the carrier, to be involved in it, rendering the situation on the Korean peninsula so tense that a nuclear war may break out any moment," KCNA said. "The US should not boast its military muscle," KCNA said. "The DPRK (North Korea) has self-defensive national defence capacity powerful enough to beat back any formidable enemy at a single stroke."

7. US DPRK Plane Interception Protest

The Washington File ("TEXT: US SAYS IT HAS DELIVERED ORAL PROTEST OVER NORTH KOREAN INTERCEPT," Washington, 03/12/03) posted the State Department's response to a question taken at the March 10 regular State Department briefing on the DPRK's interception of a US reconnaissance plane over the Sea of Japan March 2.

Question: Have we lodged a formal complaint with the North Koreans over their intercept of a US reconnaissance plane? If so, how, when, where?

Answer: We delivered an oral protest through the New York channel on Monday, March 10. We reiterated our call on the North Koreans to adhere to international standards of behavior and avoid any further provocative or escalatory steps. We told the North Koreans that their provocations run counter to the international community's clear desire for a peaceful diplomatic path to ensuring a nuclear weapons-free Korean peninsula.

8. Japan on UN Iraq Resolution

The Associated Press (Kenji Hall, "A UN SECURITY COUNCIL OUTSIDER, JAPAN PUSHES FOR SUPPORT OF US-LED WAR IN IRAQ," Tokyo, 03/12/03) reported that Japan's leaders are working the phones to try to persuade U.N. Security Council member nations to rally behind the US' position on Iraq. During the past few days, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has called five of the six undecided council members - Pakistan, Chile, Guinea, Cameroon and Mexico - to persuade them to support Washington. He's also warned that a divided Security Council could undermine the United Nations's authority, officials say. Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi, meanwhile, has phoned Angola, the sixth member with a key swing vote, and has spoken with German, French and Russian diplomats about their objections to US-led military action to disarm Iraq. "If the international community divides, it will not only benefit Iraq, but also place in doubt the authority and effectiveness of the United Nations," Kawaguchi told French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin Wednesday, according to a statement from the Foreign Ministry. Japan's attempts to sway the council debate came as diplomats at the United Nations rushed to find a compromise that might allow Iraqi President Saddam Hussein more time to prove he has disposed of weapons of mass destruction. The diplomatic push marks a rare attempt by Japan, which doesn't have a seat on the 15-member council, to assert itself on the world political stage.

9. Cross-Straits Relations

The Associated Press (William Foreman, "PRC LAWMAKERS: MISSILES POINTED TOWARD TAIWAN MEANT FOR FOREIGN THREATS, NOT ISLAND'S PEOPLE," Beijing, 03/12/03) reported that a legislator on Wednesday defended the PRC's deployment of missiles near rival Taiwan, saying they were meant to prevent foreign meddling in PRC affairs, not to threaten the self-ruled island. US and Taiwanese officials say the PRC has deployed about 400 missiles along its southern coast, directly across from Taiwan - which lies 160 kilometers (100 miles) east of the mainland. The officials and analysts say the missiles are intended to scare Taiwanese away from seeking a permanent split from the PRC. During a news conference Wednesday with the delegation picked by Beijing to represent Taiwan, a Taiwanese reporter asked why the PRC has pointed missiles at a territory that it calls its own. Delegate Wei Lihui, a health professor at Peking University, said the missiles were necessary to ward off other nations, which she did not name. "If foreign powers occupy us, interfere with our affairs, try to influence our sovereignty or our sovereign territory, can we just not do anything?" she asked.

10. PRC Domestic Economy

The New York Times (Christopher Buckley, "CAPITALISTS IN PRC LEGISLATURE SPEAK OUT FOR PROPERTY RIGHTS," Beijing, 03/12/03) reported that while Mao warned against "capitalist roaders" overpowering the PRC's revolution, Mao perhaps never imagined that actual capitalists would one day press their cause here in his Great Hall of the People. The presence of more than a hundred of them at the current meeting of the National People's Congress is part of the Communist Party's tightening embrace of the market economy. The assembly is a largely ritual gathering that meets for

a fortnight every year to endorse the party leadership's policies. But so far the capitalist representatives have indicated that they will not be meek partners in this marriage of political power and economic muscle. Since the opening of the Congress on March 5, several groups of pro-business representatives have issued loud public calls for a constitutional amendment to protect private property from arbitrary confiscation and marauding officials. The national chamber of private businesses warned the legislature that the lack of secure property rights was forcing investors to send money abroad. The Congress should, it said, "make it clear that property is a citizen's basic right and give state protection to citizens' legitimate private property rights."

11. US-Russia Non-proliferation Accord

The Associated Press (Charles J. Hanley, "US, RUSSIA SIGN ACCORDS REVISING SHUTDOWN PLANS FOR SIBERIAN PLUTONIUM PLANTS," Vienna, 03/12/03) reported that the US and Russia signed agreements on Wednesday reviving an on-again, off-again deal to shut down the last three Russian reactors producing nuclear weapons-grade plutonium. Under terms of the accords, the US will spend an estimated US\$500 million on two new fossil-fuel power plants to replace the reactors, which provide heat and electricity to Seversk and Zheleznogorsk. The Siberian cities once were secret, "closed" locations of the Soviet military establishment. The agreements "set the stage for another important advancement in our cooperative nonproliferation efforts," US Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham said. The signing "demonstrated to the entire world that Russia and America are friends and partners," said his Russian counterpart, Atomic Energy Minister Alexander Rumyantsev. They signed the documents at Vienna's Hofburg Congress Hall, on the sidelines of a three-day global conference, co-sponsored by their governments, on another nonproliferation concern, the potential for development of terrorist "dirty bombs" - conventional, non-nuclear bombs packed with radioactive materials.

12. Japan Role in Iraq War

The Japan Times ("JAPAN MAY AID DISPLACED WITH RELIEF, MEDICINE IN EVENT OF WAR ON IRAQ," 03/12/03) reported that Japan is considering airlifting relief materials and providing medical services in case a US-led war in Iraq creates a wave of refugees, government officials said Wednesday. The assistance is being considered as part of international humanitarian activities under the country's legislation designed for U.N. peacekeeping operations. Japan is limiting its role to providing aid partly because of the region's sensitivity to foreign troops, the officials said. Consent from recipient countries is required for the dispatch of Japanese troops under the peacekeeping operations law, but the government will consider sending troops after receiving a request from the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, the officials said. Under the plan, Japan will send C-130 transport aircraft to deliver relief materials to countries accepting refugees from Iraq. Medical personnel of the Self-Defense Forces will be sent in to help any refugees with sanitation and water supply, the officials said. The U.N. refugee agency predicts that hundreds of thousands of people could be displaced in a possible war in Iraq, most of them being Shiite Muslims. Half are expected to flee to Iran, while the rest would stream into Turkey, Syria and other neighboring countries, the agency said.

13. DPRK on Japanese Abduction

The Korean Central News Agency of DPRK ("REMARKS OF JAPANESE FOREIGN MINISTER ACCUSED," Pyongyang, 03/12/03) reported that Japanese Foreign Minister Kawaguchi said at the recent talks that it is the basic policy of the government to settle kidnapping and nuclear issues to

aspire after normalization of Japan-DPRK relations. Her remarks reflect the wrong stand of the Japanese Government which does not want early solution of the DPRK-Japan relations. Minju Joson today says this in a signed commentary. It goes on: In order to improve the DPRK-Japan relations Japan should redress its past crimes. But Japan is now raising such subordinate issues as "kidnapping" and "nuclear development" which is not related to it, as if they are the basic issues in improving the DPRK-Japan relations. This is nothing but a cunning move to cover up its past crimes. At a time when the US moves to stifle the DPRK are going to extremes, Japan is trying to capitalize on the US policy, obtain "qualifications" to meddle in the issue of the Korean Peninsula and avoid redressing its past, a key for the solution of the DPRK-Japan relations, under the pretext of the "nuclear issue." If Japan recklessly acts in sympathy with the US moves to stifle the DPRK over the nuclear issue the DPRK-Japan relations will be more complicated. Japan should do what it should do with discretion.

II. Republic of Korea

1. Preparation for Summit and Economic Stability

Joongang Ilbo (Koh Hyun-kohn, Choi Hoon, "TEAM IS IN U.S. PREPARING FOR SUMMIT," Seoul, 03/12/03) reported that president Roh Moo-hyun's senior foreign policy adviser, Ban Ki-moon, is in US with a delegation that also includes economic and military officials. Officials said the key purpose of the trip was ROK's economy, which was also the topic of a hastily-called economic officials' meeting here. Coming before an expected visit to US by Foreign Minister Yoon Young-kwan later this month and a planned visit this spring by President Roh, the trip is seen as a preparatory mission for those higher-level meetings. But the head of international finance at the Ministry of Finance and Economy is part of the group because he will meet with two credit ratings agencies, Standard and Poor's and Moody's Investors Service, as the Korean won's value and stock markets here tumble. A senior finance ministry official said Director General Kwon Tae-shin will try to calm fears about the economy. The credit ratings companies will be asked specifically to keep their ratings where they are now. Moody's downgraded the outlook for ROK two notches to negative last month.

2. US-DPRK Confrontation

Joongang Ilbo (Ser Myo-ja, "U.S. PRETESTS NORTH'S BUZZING OF SPY FLIGHT," Seoul, 03/12/02) reported that US filed a formal complaint with DPRK over its interception of a US reconnaissance plane. After the midair challenge by four North Korean fighter jets against an US spy plane on March 2, the White House said it would officially protest the event. "We delivered an oral protest through the New York channel on Monday," a US State Department spokesman said Monday. DPRK continued to criticize US surveillance activities. The official Korean Central News Agency quoted the state-run Rodong Shinmun Tuesday as saying that the interception of the US spy plane was a fair and legitimate action to defend its sovereignty. US reacted calmly to Monday's missile test by DPRK. It "came as no surprise," said Richard Boucher, State Department spokesman. US appeared more concerned by DPRK's nuclear aspirations than by the missile test, which had been predicted. US President George W. Bush spoke to leaders of PRC and Japan, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said. In separate conversations with PRC's President Jiang Zemin and Japan's Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, Bush recalled their commitment to seek peaceful means to keep the peninsula free of nuclear weapons. "The president believes diplomacy is the best, the most effective way to disarm North Korea," Fleischer added.

3. The Second Threat, DPRK

Chosun Ilbo (JooYong-joong, "PUBLIC SAYS NORTH SECOND BIGGEST THREAT," Seoul, 03/12/02) reported that according to a report out of US this week by the polling company Zogby, USs consider Al Qaida the most dangerous threat in the world. Thirty-two percent of the respondents said Al Qaida represented the biggest danger, followed by DPRK at 30 percent and Iraq at 22 percent. The poll was conducted March 5-7. Support for a war against Iraq rose to 57 percent from last month's 54 percent. President George W. Bush's approval rating dropped slightly, to 54 percent from 57 percent. The poll also showed that 62 percent of whites support the war, while 75 percent of blacks oppose it. The Republicans overwhelmingly support the war, at 84 percent. Independents are split at 52 percent, while only 35 percent of Democrats support it.

4. ROK-US Relations Overview

Chosun Ilbo (Kwon Kyung-bok, "DEAL WITH NORTH MULTILATERALLY, MINISTER SAYS," Seoul, 03/12/03) reported that foreign Minister Yoon Young-kwan said Wednesday that President Roh Moo-hyun would visit US in late April or early May, and that he would meet with US Secretary of State Colin Powell late this month to pave the way for Roh's visit. Speaking in a radio interview, Yoon also said that ROK preferred a multilateral approach to the North Korean nuclear problem, as does US, but that ROK wanted talks between US and DPRK to take place within such a framework. On the possible relocation of US forces in ROK, Yoon said that discussions on the issue would start next month and that the government's position was that the deterrence factor of the forces and security pledges need to be maintained. The ROK-US relationship should develop into a mature one between two democracies, and changes along those lines should appear within a year, he said. On Seoul's support for a war in Iraq, Yoon said that the government may send non-combat troops and various kinds of economic support.

III. Japan

1. Japan on War against Iraq

The Mainichi Shimbun (Yoshiaki Nakagawa, "SWAYED VIEW ON THE US: LDP," 03/12/03) reported that the difference of the view on the US has surfaced among the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in the wake of the recent Iraqi crisis. The Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has tried to strengthen the US-Japan relations, while Makoto Koga, the former secretary-general of the LDP, who also regards the cooperation with the US as important, has sought the diplomatic strategy on his own. The former prime minister Yasuhiro Nakasone promoted the active cooperation with the US, saying, "Japan must not be slow (in the case of the war against Iraq)." Koga stated in his lecture, "It is reckless to support and go with the US only due to the existence of the Japan-US alliance or the North Korea crisis." Meanwhile, Mikio Aoki, the secretary-general of the House of the Councilors, said, "We have no methods to defend Japan from the missiles of the North Korea. (Therefore) we need to keep pace with the US." Hiromu Nonaka, the former secretary-general of the LDP, said, "It is only the United States that can break the impasse regarding the North Korea," while he has not yet openly supported the possible US-led attack on Iraq.

The Mainichi Shimbun (Katsumi Kawakami, "FORMER LDP PRESIDENTS CALL FOR DELIBERATE JUDGEMENT ON IRAQ," 03/12/03) reported that the Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi talked with five former presidents of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) on Iraq. Ryuichiro Hashimoto asked Koizumi to judge even more deliberately. Kiichi Miyazawa manifested his

reluctance to support the possible attack on Iraq, saying, "Japan has supported the US in that we keep on pressing Iraq. We haven't argued whether we should wage war or not." Yohei Kohno also opposed to the war without the UN resolution, commenting, "There is no international rule to permit preemptive attack." Meanwhile, Yoshiro Mori pointed out that the issue on Iraq would be after all linked to the issue on the North Korea.

2. Japanese Logistic Support in the Arabian Sea

The Japan Times ("SDF REFUELING COVERS MORE SHIPS," 03/12/03) reported that the Japanese Cabinet agreed Tuesday to expand the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) refueling activities in the Indian Ocean to include vessels from Italy, the Netherlands and Spain as part of Japan's logistic support for US-led military operations in Afghanistan. The latest expansion is apparently aimed at helping the US forces in Afghanistan while the US prepares for a war on Iraq.

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We invite you to reply to today's report, and we welcome commentary or papers for distribution to the network.

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