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I. United States

1. Iraq Japan Abductions

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN TRYING TO CONFIRM NEW IRAQ ABDUCTIONS," 04/15/04) reported that Japan officials are trying to confirm a statement by an opposition lawmaker that two more Japanese nationals have been abducted in Iraq, they said. Yukihisa Fujita of the Democratic Party of Japan said in Jordan that the two, including at least one journalist, were kidnapped while working on a story. "That is being reported by the wires and we are trying to get confirmation," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hatsuhisa Takashima stated. "We are still working on it." He did not expect any announcement to be made soon. Three other Japanese -- volunteer aid workers Noriaki Imai, 18, Nahoko Takato, 34, and 32-year-old photojournalist Soichiro Koriyama -- were kidnapped a

week ago, throwing the nation in turmoil over its controversial support role in Iraq. The three are among about 40 foreign hostages from 12 countries being held by insurgents battling the US-led coalition in Iraq.

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN HOSTAGE DRAMA ENTERS SEVENTH DAY AS TOKYO DENIES PROLONGING CRISIS," 04/14/04) reported that the crisis over three Japanese hostages in Iraq moved into its seventh day as Tokyo rejected claims Premier Junichiro Koizumi had prolonged the crisis by calling their captors "terrorists". There was still no news on the fate of the three as the hours ticked past a deadline for their execution as Japan steadfastly refused to meet demands of withdrawing its troops. Sheikh Abdel Sala Al-Kubaissi, of the Committee of Muslim Scholars said in Iraq Tuesday that a Koizumi statement insisting that Japan would not to yield "to terrorists' foul threats," had led insurgents to rethink freeing the captives. Top Japan spokesman Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda criticized the sheikh's remark at a press conference. "I want him to think about whether that will aid their release," Fukuda said. Fukuda also rejected the suggestion that a four-day visit by US Vice President Dick Cheney had further endangered the hostages by highlighting Japan's close ties with America, which is leading the occupation of Iraq. "It would not be good to concern ourselves with every such little thing," Fukuda said. "It is natural that things that happen in Japan are broadcast. Is that to say we should just do nothing?"

2. ROK Domestic Politics

Agence France-Presse ("SOUTH KOREA POISED TO ELECT NEW PARLIAMENT IN SHIFT TO THE LEFT," 04/15/04) reported that ROK voters were poised to elect a new parliament Thursday in a tight race that could trigger the biggest shift to the left in four decades here. Some 35.6 million eligible voters can cast ballots at 13,167 polling stations from 6:00 am Wednesday. The voting closes at 6:00 pm, with official results expected within six hours. About 1,170 candidates are competing for 243 directly contested seats, with 56 additional seats to be distributed according to the number of popular votes each party gains. With a reformist president already in office, his loyalists in the upstart ruling Uri Party were tipped to become the biggest single party in the 299-seat new chamber. No reformist party has controlled the ROK's National Assembly since 1960, when a democratic group held short-lived power before it was snuffed out by a military coup. Last month's impeachment of President Roh Moo-Hyun remains the single key issue in a tight race between the conservative Grand National Party and the Uri Party for control of the National Assembly for the next four years. The GNP is impregnable in the southeastern part of the country, cradle of three decades of military rulers who doled out favours to their home supporters. Pollsters say the Uri Party, which holds only 49 seats in the outgoing legislature, should emerge as the largest single bloc

Agence France-Presse ("S.KOREANS ASKED TO AVENGE IMPEACHMENT IN PARLIAMENTARY VOTE," 04/14/04) reported that South Koreans vote Thursday to elect a new parliament, juggling calls to avenge the impeachment of President Roh Moo-Hyun, reverse the decision to send troops to Iraq and redefine ties with the DPRK. Last month's impeachment remains the single key issue in a tight race between conservatives and pro-Roh progressives for control of the National Assembly for the next four years. "Impeachment is still the key factor," said Lee Chung-Hee, politics professor at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies. "The people can't erase impeachment when considering who they are going to vote for."

3. PRC on Taiwan Presidential Elections

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA LAUNCHES POST-ELECTION BARRAGE ON TAIWAN, WARNING AGAINST INDEPENDENCE," 04/14/04) reported that the PRC launched its biggest barrage against

Taiwan since the island's presidential election last month, warning against any move towards independence from the mainland. While a ranking government spokesman declared the PRC's lack of faith in president-reelect Chen Shui-bian, top leaders sought to enlist US support on the issue in talks with visiting US Vice President Dick Cheney. The Taiwan Affairs Office used its first briefing after the island's March 20 presidential election to accuse poll winner Chen of "trying to cover up the truth" with talk of a framework for peace with the mainland. "It's clear that Chen undermines peace and stability between the two sides," Li Weiyi, spokesman of the office, told reporters. "Yet he hopes to use the so-called framework for peace and stability to hoodwink public opinion." He said the PRC would never tolerate formal independence for Taiwan, separated from the mainland since the end of a civil war in 1949, and would never allow anyone to split the two sides by any means. "No one should underestimate the determination and capability of the PRC government and people to safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the motherland at any cost," he said. Plans to write a new constitution for the island will result in "tensions and danger" in the Taiwan Straits area, Li said.

4. US-Taiwan Relations

Asia Pulse ("US PROMISES TO BRIEF TAIWAN ON CHENEY'S BEIJING VISIT: MOFA," Taipei, 04/14/04) reported that the Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) is closely monitoring US Vice President Dick Cheney's current visit to mainland China, MOFA spokesman Richard Shih said Tuesday. Cheney arrived in Beijing that day on the second leg of an East Asian tour after a four-day trip to Tokyo. Shih said the Bush administration fully understands Taiwan's concern about Cheney's Beijing visit. "The US government has promised to brief our representative office in Washington, DC on Cheney's visit at an appropriate time," Shih said. Cross-Taiwan Strait relations are expected to be on the agenda of Cheney's talks with the mainland PRC leadership during his first formal visit to the mainland since assuming the vice presidency. Cheney is scheduled to travel to Seoul Thursday.

5. Cheney PRC Visit

Agence France-Presse ("CHENEY FACES PRESSURE ON TAIWAN IN CHINA, PRESENTS EVIDENCE ON NKOREA," 04/14/04) reported that US Vice President Dick Cheney was pressured over Taiwan in meetings with the PRC's top leaders, while he presented them with new intelligence on the DPRK's nuclear program. Within the space of a few hectic hours, he met the PRC's three most powerful men -- President Hu Jintao, Premier Wen Jiabao and military chief Jiang Zemin -- and was left in no doubt what they wanted from Washington. "We hope that the US can observe its commitment to adhere to the one-China policy," Hu told Cheney. Hu told Cheney the US should oppose "any words or action by the Taiwan leaders attempting to change Taiwan's status quo", and urged it not to "send wrong signals to the Taiwan authorities". Jiang also hammered the point home, telling Cheney the Taiwan issue was pivotal for the development of Sino-US ties. "The Taiwan issue concerns the sovereignty and territorial integrity of China, and is related to Sino-US relations and the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region as well," he said. "Sino-US ties will have more room for development if the Taiwan issue is well handled."

The Associated Press (Dickey Mure, "N KOREA HAS BOMB, CHENEY TELLS CHINA," 04/14/04) reported that US Vice President Dick Cheney has underlined US hopes for greater efforts by the PRC to end the DPRK's nuclear weapons program by presenting the PRC with new evidence suggesting the DPRK has already built some atomic bombs. "Time is not necessarily on our side ... We think it's important to move forward aggressively," a senior US official stated after talks between Cheney and top PRC leaders in Beijing on Wednesday. However, the PRC gave no hint of any significant change to its strategy toward the DPRK, or that Cheney's visit had achieved any

narrowing of Sino-US differences over Taiwan. Over the past year the PRC has been markedly more active in its efforts to defuse tensions surrounding the DPRK, hosting multilateral talks and pushing its old ally to attend. But US critics say PRC leaders continue to focus on encouraging compromise from both the US and the DPRK rather than throwing their full economic and political weight behind US attempts to make the DPRK forswear nuclear arms. PRC officials have also expressed doubt over claims from US intelligence that Kim Jong-il's regime has built some nuclear warheads, but the US says new evidence has offered third-party confirmation. Abdul Qadeer Khan, the father of Pakistan's nuclear bomb program, has allegedly told interrogators he saw three nuclear devices during a trip to the DPRK five years ago.

6. PRC-Canada Relations

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA SLAMS CANADIAN PM OVER PLAN TO MEET DALAI LAMA," 04/15/04) reported that the PRC warned Canada it was fanning separatism and making a "drastic departure" in policy after Prime Minister Paul Martin agreed to meet Tibet's spiritual leader the Dalai Lama. In a strongly worded statement, the PRC embassy in Ottawa pointedly compared the Tibetan issue with Canada's past struggle to prevent francophone Quebec province going it alone. "We are surprised to learn that the prime minister of Canada is to meet the Dalai Lama during his visit," the embassy statement said. "Our position is: we are strongly opposed to the Dalai Lama's planned visit and any meeting with Canadian officials." The Dalai Lama will visit Vancouver, Ottawa and Toronto during a visit between April 19 and May 5.

7. DPRK PRC Human Rights

Donga Ilbo (Jei-Gyoon Park, "NORTH KOREA AS ABSOLUTE HUMAN RIGHTS OPPRESSION COUNTRY," 04/14/04) reported that the DPRK has been selected as one of the 12 countries with the lowest standard of human rights in the world. Announced on April 14, the sixth annual report of "The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (OPHRD)," a French human rights activist organization, selected 12 countries including the DPRK, the PRC, Bhutan, Eritrea, Equatorial Guinea, Laos, Libya, Myanmar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Turkmenistan, and Vietnam as the "absolute oppression countries" with the lowest level of human rights. Next to "absolute oppression countries," 23 countries including Iran, Indonesia, and Tunisia were selected as "systematic oppression countries."

II. Japan

1. Japan Iraq Troops Dispatch

Kyodo ("GSDF CHIEF OF STAFF VISITS SAMAWAH TO RALLY TROOPS," Samawah, Iraq, 04/03/04) reported that the chief of staff of the Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) visited a GSDF camp in Samawah on April 2 to raise the morale of troops tasked with providing reconstruction assistance. General Hajime Massaki, the first top-ranking official of the Defense Agency or the SDF visit Samawah, told a news conference at the camp that he was relieved to see his personnel were all safe. Back in Tokyo, however, Defense Agency officials were criticized for leading the agency's press club to believe the day before that Massaki was still in Japan; in fact, he had already departed for Iraq. Officials at the Ground Staff Office apologized to the irate press club, admitting that "it was an inappropriate dissemination of information." Some at the Ground Staff Office, however, argued that the visit was "part of a military operation" and that the action was rational. Massaki's trip is aimed at

laying the groundwork for Defense Agency Director General Shigeru Ishiba to visit Samawah. Ishiba has voiced intent to visit the city "at an appropriate time" after Massaki. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has also said he wants to visit "if circumstances permit."

The Japan Times ("ISHIBA SAYS SORRY OVER IRAQ VISIT DECEPTION," 04/06/04) reported that the Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) should not have led reporters to believe its top commander was in Japan when he was, in fact, traveling to Iraq, Defense Agency chief Shigeru Ishiba said. "We should never do anything misleading," Ishiba told a House of Councilors special committee on the reconstruction of Iraq, adding that he has told the GSDF to reflect on this deception. "Efforts to ensure safety are important," he said. "But the dispatch of (troops) by a democratic nation should be backed by the press and the public." On the same day, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda voiced understanding over this strategy. "It was a judgment made by the SDF in view of considerations for safety," Fukuda said. "It cannot be said wrong outright."

The Asahi Shimbun ("GSDF TOLD TO STAY INSIDE THEIR CAMP," 04/07/04) reported that Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) members in Iraq have been told to restrict their activities to inside their camp at Samawah because of mounting violence in the country, Defense Agency officials said on April 6. "But, we don't have information on the likelihood of terrorist attacks on the SDF," said an official. Meanwhile, in Samawah, tribal chieftains began urging local residents not to get caught up in violent anti-US rioting that swept three cities. Earlier this month, demonstrators in Samawah protested the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority. The rally went off without incident, but added to the growing concerns of many in the area.

2. MSDF Minesweeping Drills

The Japan Times ("MSDF TO JOIN DRILLS," 04/03/04) reported that the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) will participate in international minesweeping drills off Singapore between April 21 and May 7, the Defense Agency said. It is the second time for the MSDF to participate in Western Pacific minesweeping drills, cosponsored by the Singaporean and Indonesian navies, following drills in 2001.

3. Japan-US Radiation Study

Kyodo ("U.S. MIGHT CUT FUNDING FOR JAPAN RADIATION STUDY," Hiroshima, 04/03/04) reported that the US Department of Energy might cut its funding to the Hiroshima-based Radiation Effects Research Foundation (RERF) for the US 2005 fiscal year beginning in October, foundation officials said. The department has said it plans to concentrate funding on national security, the officials said. RERF is responsible for joint research by Japan and the US on atomic bomb survivors in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Of RERF's 3.7 billion yen annual budget, 2.8 billion yen is shared on a 50-50 basis by the energy department and the Japan's Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry. The remaining 900 million yen is covered by the health ministry alone. The plan was conveyed to health ministry officials and Burton Bennett, a top official of RERF, by US officials who visited Japan in mid-March. Bennett said he hopes the department will contribute to RERF in accordance with annual custom due to the importance of the research.

4. Japan New UN Envoy

The Japan Times ("PROFESSOR KITAOKA TO BE U.N. ENVOY," 04/03/04) reported that the Japanese government said that it will appoint Shinichi Kitaoka, a University of Tokyo professor and a foreign policy adviser to the government, as an ambassador to the UN. Kitaoka's appointment is part

of the Foreign Ministry's effort to recruit outside experts to serve as overseas envoys, government sources said. Kitaoka, 55, will replace Yoshiyuki Motomura, one of the two deputy permanent representatives to the UN. There are three Japanese ambassadors to the UN, headed by Koichi Haraguchi, the permanent representative.

5. Japan-US SOFA Revision

The Japan Times (Kanako Takahara, "U.S. TO SIT IN IF POLICE GRILL CRIME SUSPECTS IN THE MILITARY," 04/03/04) reported that Japan and the US agreed on April 2 to allow US officials to be present during police questioning of US service members suspected of committing heinous crimes in Japan, the Foreign Ministry said. Under the agreement, a US command representative will be permitted to sit in on interrogations "to enable US military authorities to swiftly carry out their investigation." Japan would only agree to the presence of a US investigator during police questioning, and not a lawyer as initially requested by the US, they said. Yasumasa Nagamine, deputy director general of the ministry's North American Affairs Bureau, and Brigadier General Timothy Larsen, deputy commander of US Forces in Japan, reached the agreement during a meeting of the Japan-US Joint Committee in Tokyo.

6. Japan Constitutional Revision

The Japan Times ("KANZAKI FAVORS DEFINING SDF IN THE CONSTITUTION," 04/05/04) reported that New Komeito leader Takenori Kanzaki suggested he would support a constitutional amendment that would define the Self-Defense Forces (SDF). "The SDF are thought of overseas as the military, and we could stipulate them in the Constitution," Kanzaki said on a TV Asahi program. Kanzaki, whose party forms the ruling bloc with the Liberal Democratic Party, also expressed approval for sending the SDF to participate in multinational forces based on UN Security Council resolutions as long as they are do not engage in combat. He said the SDF personnel currently deployed in Iraq on a humanitarian mission could be withdrawn if terror acts become frequent. On Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni Shrine, which have damaged diplomatic relations with China, Kanzaki suggested that a new facility to honor Japan's war dead should be built.

7. Japan's Congested Airspace

The Asahi Shimbun ("SDF, U.S. MILITARY TO OPEN UP AIRSPACE," 04/06/04) reported that a new air traffic control system to be introduced in Japan in 2005 will allow commercial aircraft to fly over restricted airspace set aside for the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and US military jets when no training exercises are conducted. Officials of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport have put together an outline for the new air traffic control system and are continuing negotiations with the SDF and US military. Ministry sources said both the SDF and US military have indicated they are willing to cooperate. Employees from the SDF and US military will be stationed at a new air traffic control centre in Fukuoka and coordinate information about training-free days. There are about 120 days a year when no training is conducted. The SDF and US military representatives will tell air traffic controllers at least a day in advance whether restricted airspace can be used by commercial jets. The use of restricted airspace will also ease traffic congestion. Commercial jets have to zigzag over Japan to avoid military training airspace. For example, jets that leave Haneda for the Okinawan capital of Naha must wing their way over the coast once they reach the airspace above Yaizu, Shizuoka Prefecture, to avoid SDF "territory."

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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