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I. United States

1. US-DPRK Six-Way Talks Consultation

Agence France-Presse ("US MAKES DIRECT CALL TO NKOREA ON SIX-WAY TALKS, CONSULTS WITH CHINA," 01/14/04) reported that the US said it had made a rare direct call to North Korea to resume multilateral talks on ending its nuclear weapons development as senior US and PRC officials consulted on how to bring Pyongyang back to the table. Joseph DeTrani, the new US special envoy for North Korea, delivered the message to Pak Gil Son, the DPRK's ambassador to the United Nations, in "a brief introductory" meeting on January 8 in New York, the State Department said. "DeTrani emphasized the importance of the six-party framework," deputy spokesman Adam Ereli said. He stressed that the meeting between DeTrani, who assumed the DPRK position in November,

and Pak was not an indication that the US was ready for bilateral discussions on the nuclear crisis. "There's no way ... anyone should take away from this the impression that somehow it's a alternative to or a diversion from the multilateral handling of this problem," Ereli told reporters.

2. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Crisis

Reuters (Paul Eckert, " S.KOREA'S ROH URGES PATIENCE IN NORTH NUCLEAR ROW," Seoul, 01/14/04) reported that ROK President Roh Moo-hyun called Wednesday for patience in the search for an end to the DPRK's nuclear ambitions and said an unofficial US visit to the DPRK last week would help dialogue succeed. Japan, the PRC, Russia, the ROK and the US have been trying for months to arrange a second round of six-party talks with the DPRK on the crisis after an initial round ended inconclusively in August. An unofficial US group visited the DPRK's Yongbyon nuclear site last week, but has yet to make public the details of what it found there. The DPRK said it showed the visitors its nuclear deterrent force. "I have no details yet on the results of the visit," Roh told a news conference at Seoul's presidential Blue House compound. "The US effort to make the visit is meaningful and so is the DPRK effort to let the visit take place. "North Korea might have tried to display something by allowing the visit to take place. But the purpose of showing off can be considered part of a process to resolve the problem."

3. US-ROK DPRK Nuclear Talks Discussion

Agence France-Presse ("US, SKOREAN OFFICIALS MEET AS DISCUSSIONS ON SIX-PARTY NKOREA TALKS CONTINUE," Washington, 01/14/04) reported that senior diplomats from the US and the ROK met here to continue consultations on the resumption of multilateral talks to end the stalemate over the DPRK's nuclear weapons programs. US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James Kelly spoke with Wi Sung-lac, the director general of the ROK foreign ministry's North American Affairs bureau, as part of a series of meetings on the DPRK talks, the State Department said. It was held "in the context of continuing our consultations with friends and participants in the six-party talks, to define those talks further and to move towards a new round that we hope would take place at an early date," spokesman Richard Boucher said. He declined to provide any specifics of Wednesday's meeting, which followed talks on Tuesday between Kelly, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and Fu Ying, the director of the Asian section of the PRC foreign ministry. The PRC, which hosted the inconclusive first round in of six-party talks in August, has been working to organize a resumption which had been initially been expected in December. But disagreements over what can be achieved and the wording of a final communique have stalled the second round, according to US officials. Boucher said Washington was eager to resume the talks "having worked in advance to prepare these talks in a way that leads us to some clarity about what kind of constructive outcome they could produce." A planned meeting this week between Kelly and a senior Japanese diplomat has been postponed for scheduling reasons, he said.

4. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Proposal

Associated Press (Sang-Hun Choe, "S. KOREA: N. KOREAN PROPOSAL DISCUSSED," Seoul, 01/14/04) reported that the ROK said Wednesday that the US and its allies are discussing what to offer in return for the DPRK's proposal to freeze its nuclear weapons programs, as Washington urges the DPRK to return to six-nation negotiations. ROK Foreign Minister Yoon Young-kwan said countries were "looking into and consulting on North Korea's proposal to freeze its nuclear facilities in return for compensation." "Their discussions are moving ... toward specifying measures to be taken in return for North Korea's proposal of a nuclear freeze," he said. But Yoon warned the

discussions don't mean countries have accepted the North's proposal to freeze its nuclear programs as a first step in talks if Washington lifts sanctions against the isolated country, resumes free oil shipments, and removes it from the US list of terrorism-sponsoring countries. Also Wednesday, President Roh Moo-hyun called a US visit last week to North Korea's secretive Yongbyon nuclear complex a "meaningful" step in resolving the nuclear standoff and urged patience in finding a peaceful solution. Roh said during his New Year's press conference that the US visit could be interpreted as "both sides having the will to resolve the problem." The DPRK said the US was shown the country's "nuclear deterrent," but did not elaborate. The US visitors, who included a nuclear scientist and two US Congressional staffers, have declined to publicly discuss what they saw until they report to Washington.

5. US General Myers PRC Visit

Agence France-Presse ("US GENERAL MYERS SHOWN SECRETIVE SPACE CENTRE ON RED CARPET VISIT TO CHINA," 01/15/04) reported that the PRC's military rolled out the red carpet for visiting US chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard Myers, who was allowed a rare visit to the nation's secretive space control center. Myers, the highest level military officer to visit since ties nose-dived three years ago, was given an honor guard welcome as he met his counterpart General Liang Guanglie, chief of general staff of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). A 40-piece military band performed the two national anthems in front of the Defense Ministry ahead of scheduled talks between the two military leaders. "China has all along taken a positive attitude toward the development of Sino-US military relations," Liang was quoted by Xinhua news agency as telling Myers. "We hope to make efforts with the US side to further the development of forward looking, healthy and stable military relations as an increasingly active element of overall constructive and cooperative Sino-US relations." During talks Liang also laid out China's "principled position on Taiwan" and warned the US against selling weapons to the island that Beijing has vowed to reunify, through force, if necessary. "The Taiwan issue is the most sensitive issue in PRC-US relations," Liang said in earshot of journalists. "We firmly oppose any arms sales by the US to Taiwan."

6. Japan-US Missile Defense

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN MAY LIFT ARMS EXPORT BAN FOR MISSILE DEFENSE WITH US: PREMIER," 01/14/04) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has said Tokyo may partially lift its ban on arms exports to take part in a joint missile defense program with the US. But Koizumi denied there was any immediate plan to jointly develop weapons with other countries than the US, despite his defense chief's suggestion that Japan may seek partners other than the US. Koizumi told reporters that his government would consider lifting its ban on the arms shipments only "in connection with the missile defense" project with the US. The premier made the remarks after Defense Agency Director General Shigeru Ishiba said in the Dutch capital The Hague on Tuesday he should drastically review the ban so that Japan can seek other nations besides the US to develop weapons. Ishiba is currently on a trip to Britain, the Netherlands and France to discuss international efforts to rebuild Iraq with European defense ministers. Earlier in the day, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda cautioned against a blanket easing of the arms shipment embargo. "Japan, which has excellent technologies, may become a big exporter of arms" if the ban is lifted completely, Fukuda told a news conference. "First, we have to consider a framework in which we can send a clear message to the international community so that we can avoid creating misunderstanding in neighboring countries," Fukuda said. "Our position is that Japan shouldn't sell arms and shouldn't support the proliferation of missiles," he said. "The government has to consider the issue thoroughly."

7. Japan-DPRK Kidnap Issues

Agence France-Presse ("JAPANESE OFFICIALS VISIT NORTH KOREA TO DISCUSS KIDNAP ISSUE," 01/14/04) reported that Japanese diplomats have traveled to North Korea hoping to discuss the issue of kidnapped Japanese nationals while visiting the hermit state for talks on a Japanese detained there for drug-smuggling, press reports say. Four Japanese foreign ministry officials arrived in the DPRK capital via Beijing on Tuesday on the first trip to Pyongyang by government officials since late 2002, and are expected to stay until Saturday, the Mainichi Shimbun, the Nihon Keizai Shimbun and Kyodo News Agency said. During the visit, the diplomats are likely to discuss the kidnapping issue and confirm the identity of a Japanese man held in the DPRK on drug-smuggling charges since October last year and could take custody of him, the reports said. The DPRK's purpose in inviting the Japanese mission was "not clear but it is an unusual response, suggesting North Korea's softer approach towards Japan," said the Mainichi Shimbun. The Japanese foreign ministry official confirmed an unspecified number of diplomats were visiting Pyongyang but gave no further details. The government has not commented on the Japanese national held on drugs-related charges but reports said he is a 42-year old gangster from Tokyo named Yoshiaki Sawada. At the time of his arrest, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said that Sawada had "planned to bribe a DPRK into buying drugs from a third country and smuggle them into Japan," on board a ferry plying the DPRK's only regular link with Japan. Kyodo said the Japanese team would discuss ways to allow the relatives of five Japanese kidnap victims, who returned to Japan from the DPRK for the first time in 24 years in October 2002, to join them here.

8. WHO on PRC SARS Resurgence

Agence France-Presse ("WHO CONFOUNDED BY SARS, AGAIN SEEKS CLUES IN CHINA'S ANIMAL MARKETS," 01/14/04) reported that World Health Organisation experts have revisited animal markets seeking clues that may help explain a re-emergence of SARS, as evidence mounts that there is no root cause linking the new cases. "There is certainly no smoking gun at the moment with any of the three cases that would enable us to say precisely where they got it," said Dr Robert Breiman, WHO team leader said in southern Guangzhou city. "It's still a little bit of a mystery, a bit of what you might call a jigsaw puzzle and at some point I have a feeling this will all come together and maybe be fairly obvious, but at the moment it's not clear." WHO experts were also awaiting laboratory results that could confirm that the PRC's two suspected cases indeed have Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. PRC officials denied a report by Hong Kong Cable television that a 20-yea--old waitress undergoing treatment had been confirmed as having the respiratory illness. A 35-yea--old businessman also remains a suspected case while a 32-year-old man, the only official confirmed case so far, has been released from hospital. PRC officials and WHO agree that this year's three cases were strikingly different from those last year. In this year's cases the intensity of the disease appears to have diminished. "The severity of the sickness has been much less than last year," said Roy Wadia, a spokesman for the WHO in Guangzhou. Confounded by the origin of the penumonia-like disease, WHO experts returned to the Xinyuan animal market Wednesday, one of the city's largest suppliers of wildlife such as the civet cat, long suspected as a possible source of SARS. The WHO took samples from chicken, duck and peacock coops. "The WHO is hoping to get a wider sampling of the animal market," Wadia said.

9. Taiwan Vote-Buying Scandal

Agence France-Presse ("TAIWAN PRESIDENT CHEN TESTIFIES OVER ALLEGED PARTY VOTE-BUYING," reported that President Chen Shui-bian has appeared in a court in eastern Taiwan to testify over alleged vote-buying by a magistrate candidate from his ruling party. It was the first time

a serving Taiwanese president has been summoned by prosecutors to give evidence in court. Prosecutors at the eastern Huanlien county questioned Chen, the chairman of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party, on his role in a campaign promise made by candidate Yu Ying-lung during magistrate elections last year. Chen declined to answer reporters' questions, saying only "thank you." Yu is accused of promising tribal chiefs in Hualien 5,000 Taiwan dollars (147 US) a month in subsidies if he was elected magistrate. He lost the race to Hsieh Shen-shan from the opposition Kuomintang. Yu, under investigation for alleged vote-buying, protested against the case which he called "absurd and abuse of power." "It is the duty of a candidate to present his public policy seeking ways to solve problems in his constituency. There is no violation of any laws," Yu told reporters. He also said the subsidy offer was made by his campaign team without involvement of the party chairman.

10. PRC on Taiwan Independence

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA MAKES "NECESSARY PREPARATIONS" TO PREVENT TAIWAN INDEPENDENCE," 01/14/04) reported that the PRC says it will stick to the principle of peaceful reunification with Taiwan in the New Year, but stressed it has made "necessary preparations" to prevent the island seeking independence. "In the New Year, the PRC government still will stick to the principle of peaceful unification, 'one country, two systems' ...," Li Weiyi, a spokesman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office said at a briefing. "At the same time, we also have the firm determination and made necessary preparations to firmly prevent all separatist activities and Taiwan independence." Li did not elaborate on what sort of preparations China has made and did not say whether any of it involves military manoevers. He wrapped up the current lunar year by once again attacking Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian over his plans to hold Taiwan's first ever referendum alongside presidential polls on March 20, demanding China remove 496 ballistic missiles targeting the island. Beijing considers the plan part of a drive towards the island's independence, a move it says it will not tolerate. "Chen Shui-bian and (Taiwan) authorities are unilaterally trying to carry out the referendum to decide cross-straits relations," Li said. "Regardless of whether the referendum is a defensive or peaceful referendum, it is a serious defiance of the 'one-china policy' and peace in the Taiwan Straits. "The purpose of the referendum is to change Taiwan's status and pave the way for Taiwan independence in the future."

11. ROK Domestic Politics

Agence France-Presse ("SOUTH KOREAN PRESIDENT PROBES FOREIGN MINISTRY IN DIPLOMACY RIFT," 01/12/04) reported that ROK President Roh Moo-Hyun's office launched an investigation of foreign ministry officials accused of criticising his foreign policy agenda. "An investigation is under way into the allegations that some foreign ministry officials made inappropriate and intolerable remarks and leaked information about their business to the media in an inappropriate manner," Roh's spokesman Yoon Tai-Young said. An official at the ministry said Foreign Minister Yoon Young-Kwan had convened a meeting of top officials. "The atmosphere is grim," he said. "The term 'investigation' is unfortunate. We are not criminals." The investigation reflects a rift between top bureaucrats in charge of policy towards the US at the foreign ministry and key advisors to Roh, according to media reports. A group of advisors led by DPRK expert Lee Jong-Seok, number two on the National Security Council, are known to ministry officials as the "Taliban," after the fundamentalist Islamic group which sheltered Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan prior to their overthrow by US-led forces in 2001, the reports said.

12. US-Australian US Missile Shield

Agence France-Presse ("AUSTRALIAN AND US DISCUSS MISSILE SHIELD AMID FEARS OF ASIA BACKLASH," Sydney, 01/14/04) reported that Prime Minister John Howard will meet US military chief General Richard Myers this week for talks expected to focus on Australia's commitment to the US missile defense shield as fears emerge of a diplomatic backlash from Asia over the program. Howard's office said he would interrupt his summer holidays on Friday to attend the meeting which coincides with talks already under way between US and Australian officials to discuss specific projects in the controversial program dubbed "Son of Star Wars." The negotiations, likely to take months, are aimed principally at agreeing a memorandum of understanding on the detail of Australia's involvement and financial commitment to the program about which fears have been raised in the PRC, Indonesia and elsewhere. The Labor opposition, backed by the minor Democrats and Greens parties and some defense analysts have also raised concerns about the government's strong support for the project. Myers, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, will be in Australia at the end of a four-nation tour that also took in Japan, the PRC and Mongolia, the US embassy confirmed. An embassy official said only that Myers was "here to thank Australia for their support in the global war on terrorism and for Operation Iraqi Freedom," but could not confirm whether the missile program was on his agenda. However, defense analysts here say Myers is probably here at least partly to encourage a deal with Australia on a missile defense shield, although he is not expected to participate in detailed discussions about it.

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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