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CONTENTS

I. United States

1. ROK Domestic Politics
2. US-PRC Military Ties
3. US-Australia Military Relations
4. US-Canada Anti-Missile Shield
5. PRC and Diaoyu Islands Dispute

I. United States

1. ROK Domestic Politics

Agence France-Presse ("SKOREA'S FOREIGN MINISTER SACKED OVER US POLICY FLAP," 01/15/04) reported that ROK President Roh Moo-Hyun sacked his foreign minister after launching an attack on officials accused of obstructing his foreign policy towards the US. "President Roh has accepted the resignation tendered by Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister Yoon Young-kwan," said Jeong Chan-Yong, senior presidential secretary for personnel affairs. On Wednesday Roh publicly criticised the ministry and said he was preparing a reshuffle to replace officials. "These officials will be replaced so there will no longer be obstacles to pursuing my foreign policy," Roh said. "Even if officials think differently from the president, they have to respect his policy because he was elected on his policy pledges." Yoon had said he was ready to discipline his subordinates but had apparently not expected to lose his job, according to media reports. The presidential office said earlier this week it had launched an investigation following allegations that some foreign ministry officials were critical of Roh's US diplomacy. 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. Yoon, 53, a career academic and former university professor and specialist in international relations, was appointed to the top diplomatic post following Roh's inauguration in February last year after acting as foreign policy advisor to Roh's transition team. Yoon, who studied in the US and obtained his doctorate from Washington's Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, accepted

responsibility for criticism. "I feel sorry to the people and the president for failing to lead you properly. I put the blame on my own lack of virtue," he told some 500 foreign ministry officials in a farewell speech.

2. US-PRC Military Ties

Agence France-Presse ("US AND CHINA COMMIT TO BUILDING MILITARY TIES BUT TAIWAN A STICKING POINT," 01/15/04) reported that the US top military officer said consensus "on many issues" had been reached in talks with the PRC's top leaders, but the Taiwan question remains a thorn in the side of warming bilateral ties. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard Myers was accorded a red-carpet welcome in China during his two-day visit and the cordiality was extended to a meeting Thursday with military strongman Jiang Zemin. The general met Jiang, the former president who still wields considerable power as head of the Central Military Commission, at Zhongnanhai where the PRC's top leaders reside, and was greeted warmly. "There are differences between China and the US but we consider that common interests exceed by far these differences," foreign ministry spokesman Kong Quan said. "Even more important, both sides are developing constructive cooperation that is beneficial for both peoples and also for the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region and the world." Myers, who met his counterpart General Liang Guanglie, chief of general staff of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), and other officials Wednesday, described his trip as "a great visit". He discussed with Jiang the DPRK and international terrorism and said they had "reached consensus on many issues." Taiwan however overshadowed the goodwill. "President (of the Central Military Commission) Jiang Zemin particularly pointed out that the Taiwan question is the most important and sensitive one in the Sino-US relations," Kong said. Jiang made clear the PRC will never tolerate Taiwan seeking independence, Kong said.

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." On Wednesday, Myers toured the mission control center of China's space program, which in October was at the heart of China's first-ever manned space flight, the Shenzhou V, the China Daily said on its website. His party was the first foreign delegation to visit the Beijing Aerospace Control Center, or "Beijing Space City" as it is known in PRC, and viewed a video-taped presentation of the flight of astronaut Yang Liwei.

3. US-Australia Military Relations

The Associated Press ("AUSTRALIA SEEKS MISSILE TIE WITH US," Sydney, 01/15/04) reported that Prime Minister John Howard met with the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff Friday morning during a visit aimed at boosting military ties between the two allies. During a brief appearance with Gen. Richard Myers, Howard told reporters he supported Australia joining US-led ballistic missile defense programs. "I can't understand why anybody would be against it," Howard said. Some in nearby Indonesia have suggested Australia could start an arms race if it pursued such programs.

Myers said he expected to discuss developments in Iraq, Afghanistan and the DPRK, as well as ways to improve cooperation between the American and Australian militaries. The security situation in Iraq is somewhat improved since the capture of Saddam Hussein, Myers said, but he added it is too soon to tell if the improvements will permanent. The Australian government has been one of the Bush administration's closest allies, contributing troops to both the Iraq and the Afghanistan conflicts. Myers also met Friday with his counterpart Gen. Peter Cosgrove, chief of the Australian Defense Force. He was set to travel to Canberra to meet with Defense Minister Robert Hill and take part in a wreath-laying ceremony at the Australian War Memorial. Myers is wrapping up a nine-day trip to the region aimed at improving military ties with Japan, China, Mongolia and Australia.

4. US-Canada Anti-Missile Shield

Agence France-Presse ("CANADA TALKING WITH US ABOUT ANTI-MISSILE SHIELD," Ottawa, 01/15/04) reported that Canada said it had begun an exchange of letters with Washington on cooperation in anti-ballistic missile defense, a possible first step in Ottawa's participation in US anti-missile shield technology. "This step will help to move forward discussions on possible Canadian participation in the missile defense of North America," Canadian Defense Minister David Pratt said in a statement. "It sets out a clear path for future negotiations, and will allow Canada to have access to the information about missile defense that we will need to make a decision on participation," he said, although stressing that Canada "continues to oppose the weaponisation of space." "Canada has had a very successful partnership with the US in defending North America, and we are always looking at ways to enhance this relationship," said Pratt. "A decision on Canada's participation in the missile defence program will be made when talks are completed, and after Parliament has been consulted." Canada had serious doubts about the anti-missile project when US President George W. Bush announced it in December 2002, but has since had second thoughts, through concerns over being side-lined from North American air defense.

5. PRC and Diaoyu Islands Dispute

Agence France-Presse ("TWENTY PRC ACTIVISTS HEAD FOR DISPUTED DIAOYU ISLANDS," 01/15/04) reported that twenty PRC activists have set off on two fishing boats bound for the disputed Diaoyu island chain, claimed by Japan, the PRC and Taiwan, state media reported. According to the Xinhua news agency, the activists from PRC companies and a non-governmental group will conduct an inspection tour of the islands for tourism purposes. The PRC has repeatedly claimed the islands as part of its territory and the activists plan to release an object inscribed "PRC territory Diaoyu Islands" into the sea off the islands, the report said. One of the organizers, Li Yiqiang, said companies on the PRC mainland had provided funding support for the mission, for the first time. Board chairman of Zhongxiang Investment Company, Tong Zeng, said the voyage would be used to investigate fishing conditions and evaluate tourism resources in the area, Xinhua said. The two boats left Xiamen in eastern Fujian province Tuesday and were scheduled to reach the islands, which are 500 kilometres (310 miles) from Japan's Okinawa Island and 140 kilometres from Taiwan, on Friday morning. The East China Sea isles are known as Diaoyu in the PRC and Taiwan, and referred to as Senkaku by the Japanese. Japan declared the islands its own territory in 1895 and they were temporarily put under US control after World War II. They were returned to Japanese rule in 1972 together with Okinawa. The dispute came to the fore in the early 1970s, when the PRC and Taiwan made claims to the islands after oil deposits were confirmed in the area by a United Nations agency. It escalated last year when the Japanese government admitted to leasing some of the disputed islands from the Japanese family which has owned them for more than three decades.

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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