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I. United States

1. DPRK Y2K Bug

Reuters ("NORTH KOREA LASHES OUT AT MILLENNIUM BUG CHARGES," Tokyo, 03/12/99) reported that the DPRK's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on March12 disputed charges that its weapons systems could be at risk of malfunctioning due to the millennium bug. KCNA said that overseas news reports that its weapons might be vulnerable to dangerous computer malfunctions were "intended to create the impression that the quality of the North's military equipment is low and its control system outdated." It added, "This is nothing but a scream of those who are extremely terrified at the self-defensive forces of the North powerful enough to destroy any formidable enemy at one stroke." KCNA said the real potential for millennium bug problems was in the ROK, demonstrated by its mistaken firing of a missile late last year. It stated, "The South Korean authorities are floating the rumor about the North's fictitious 'bug' in order to shift onto the North the blame for irretrievable accidents to be caused by the 'bug' in their military system." KCNA added, "We are fully ready to teach anyone slandering our armed forces a bitter lesson. Repentance always comes late."

2. DPRK Diplomat's Defection

The Associated Press ("THAI POLICE PREPARE ARREST WARRANTS FOR N KOREAN

DIPLOMATS," Bangkok, 03/15/99) reported that Thai National police chief Pracha Promnok told reporters that they were preparing arrest warrants for the DPRK diplomats accused of participating in the abduction of a DPRK diplomat. He added that the Thai Foreign Ministry would have to deal with the problem if the diplomats invoked claims of diplomatic immunity. Local news reports said warrants were expected to be issued against five to seven diplomats in connection with the abduction of Hong Sun-kyong, and his family. A spokesman for the Thai foreign ministry said Monday that the ministry had requested the safe release of Hong's son within a few days, or it would be forced to take unspecified actions. The spokesman declined to comment on speculation that the son was being held in the DPRK embassy, but he said that the DPRK officials know where the son is. He added that, in a Monday morning meeting with Thai foreign minister Surin Pitsuwan, DPRK officials neither accepted nor rejected the Thai request to free the son. He also said that the embassy on Sunday had handed over a letter expressing regret over the incident.

The Associated Press ("THAI COP SUSPECTED IN KIDNAPPING," 03/13/99) reported that a Thai policeman wanted in the attempted abduction of a DPRK diplomat turned himself in Saturday, claiming his role in the incident was the result of a misunderstanding. The police captain was one of two Thais wanted sought in the kidnapping of Hong Sun-kyong, a former commercial counselor at the DPRK Embassy in Bangkok.

3. PRC Views of Theater Missile Defense

Reuters ("ZHU DENIES MISSILE BUILDUP, BLASTS U.S. UMBRELLA," Beijing, 03/15/99) reported that PRC Premier Zhu Rongji on Monday warned the US against proceeding with a Theater Missile Defense (TMD) plan for Asia. Zhu stated, "We are against TMD. We are especially firm in our opposition to including Taiwan under the TMD." Zhu said that TMD would constitute a violation against international agreements on missiles as well as an encroachment on the PRC's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and an interference in the PRC's internal affairs. He also dismissed news reports that the PRC had increased its deployment of missiles facing Taiwan. He asked, "If I don't know about them, how do you know about them?" Zhu said that the PRC's missile deployments were its own business. He added, however, "Our missiles are absolutely not aimed at our brothers and sisters in Taiwan, and we will would not easily use these missiles. We are hoping for a peaceful unification of China, but we can by no means abandon the use of force. If we do that, Taiwan will be split forever from the motherland." Zhu also said that the US had overestimated the nuclear threat posed by the DPRK. He added, however, "How can we interfere with the DPRK, which is an independent country?"

4. Alleged PRC Nuclear Espionage

The New York Times ("THEFT REPORT IS A 'FARCE,' CHINA SAYS," Beijing, 03/15/99) reported that the PRC's state Xinhua News Agency, in a commentary from its Washington bureau on Sunday, rejected assertions that its spies stole nuclear-weapon designs from the US. The agency said that a recent article in the New York Times alleging nuclear espionage set off a "smear campaign against China." It added, "The whole story is a complete fabrication," and has "fanned up a hullabaloo among anti-China witch-hunters on the Capitol Hill and the press."

5. Pakistan Nuclear Status

The Associated Press ("PAKISTAN TIGHTENS NUCLEAR EXPORTS," Islamabad, 03/13/99) reported that according to Pakistan Foreign Ministry Spokesman Tariq Altaf, Pakistan has amended an old

law to tighten control over the export of nuclear technology. The revised law requires the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission's approval for the export of "nuclear substances, radioactive material ... [and] equipment used for the production, use or application of nuclear energy, including generation of electricity." Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif previously had said that new laws would be introduced to further protect against illegal export of nuclear knowledge.

6. Pakistan-India Talks

The Associated Press ("INDIA SAYS DIALOGUE WILL HELP SOLVE PROBLEMS WITH PAKISTAN," New Delhi, 03/15/99) reported that Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee told parliament on Monday that India and Pakistan must resolve their differences at the negotiating table. Press Trust of India news agency quoted Vajpayee as saying in a speech to Parliament that nuclear arms could never be used, and that each side possessing them for protection could actually be "helpful in maintaining peace." Vajpayee said that a "permanent solution" had to be found to prevent conflict. He stated, "There is no other way but to have a political dialogue." He also called on Pakistan to stop fighters from Pakistan and other countries from crossing the border to join local militants fighting for the secessions of Indian-held Kashmir.

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