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I. United States

1. PRC Domestic Politics

The New York Times (Joseph Kahn, "CHINA'S NEW PRIME MINISTER SEEN AS CAREFUL CONCILIATOR," Beijing, 03/17/03), the Associated Press (Ted Anthony, "AS CHINA'S WORLD INFLUENCE GROWS, VETERAN DIPLOMAT TAKES REINS AND PROMISES CONTINUITY," Beijing, 03/17/03), and the Associated Press (Elaine Kurtenbach, "WEN JIABAO NAMED AS CHINA'S NEXT PREMIER," Beijing, 03/17/03) reported that the third-ranking member of the PRC's Communist Party was appointed Sunday to be its next premier, assuming control of a fast-changing economy that has carried the country to new heights and created staggering problems during two decades of reform. Wen Jiabao, 60, replaces the retiring Zhu Rongji. The vote was 2,906 for Wen and three against, with 16 abstentions. Wen rose and shook hands with Zhu as the Great Hall of the People applauded. The legislature, the National People's Congress, approved Wen's elevation as the final personnel appointment of a generational leadership transition in China's government. Wen, the odds-on favorite for more than a year, becomes the country's top economic official. He made no public remarks after his appointment but shook hands with delegates after the session adjourned.

The Associated Press (Audra Ang, "CHINA'S PREMIERS OFFER DIFFERING IMAGES," Beijing, 03/17/03), CNN News (Willy Wo-Lap Lam, "CHINA'S DIPLOMATIC MAKEOVER," Hong Kong, 03/17/03) and the Associated Press (Audra Ang, "CHINA'S GOV'T COMPLETES ITS NEW CABINET," 03/17/03) reported that the PRC put the final touches on its new government Monday, installing a new Cabinet - including the first-ever commerce minister - to help keep the economy moving, fight poverty and modernize the sluggish communist system. A former ambassador to the US was appointed foreign minister. Li Zhaoxing, 62, became the PRC's top diplomat, replacing Tang Jiaxuan as international relations strain to the breaking point over Iraq. China is a veto-wielding permanent member of the U.N. Security Council. The appointments come after a week of generational leadership change in China that elevated Hu Jintao to the presidency and made Wen Jiabao premier, the official in charge of the economy. "This is a really excellent bunch of new leaders," said Xiao Yayu, mayor of Zhuzhou, a city in the central province of Hunan. "The government has been incredibly accurate in seeing the needs and matching them with talents. They are a younger, high quality group, well-educated and with lots of experience." Gen. Cao Gangchuan, a top People's Liberation Army general, was given the powerful post of defense minister in an appointment that sticks to China's tradition of having a soldier as the top defense official. Cao, who replaces Chi Haotian, has led the country's manned space program and the effort to modernize its weaponry. Earlier this month, the government announced that it would increase military spending by 9.6 percent this year, the first time in 14 years that the budget increase for the PLA has been in single digits. As the country's first commerce minister, Lu Fuyuan will be responsible for overseeing China's emerging capitalist-style trade operation and its obligations to the World Trade Organization. Lu, formerly deputy minister of foreign trade, takes over as part of a newly revamped Cabinet aimed at making the country's bureaucracy more streamlined and closer to Western-style systems dealing with free-market economies. Other new appointments include Jin Renqing, China's tax commissioner, as finance minister, and Zhou Xiaochuan, who was reappointed as central bank governor. Four vice premiers were also chosen, among them a member of the all-powerful Politburo Standing Committee of the ruling Communist Party and the country's highest-ranking woman.

2. DPRK-US Relations

The Associated Press (Jae-Suk Yoo, "NORTH KOREA SAYS ITS SOVEREIGNTY AT STAKE," Seoul, 03/17/03) reported that the DPRK warned Monday that its sovereignty is at stake in the standoff over its nuclear development, while the US ambassador in the ROK said that the DPRK has an "irrational fear" of the US. The DPRK's official Rodong Sinmun newspaper said the US' rejection of direct talks was "little short of refusing to solve the nuclear issue." "The nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula is a very crucial problem related to who beats whom," the North Korean newspaper said.

"It will decide whether the DPRK's sovereignty will be trampled down by the US or protected." The DPRK accuses the US of inciting the tension over its suspected nuclear weapons programs as a pretext for an invasion. In Seoul, US Ambassador Thomas Hubbard said the DPRK's actions posed a threat to worldwide stability because of the threat of nuclear proliferation. He repeated the Bush administration's stance that Washington wants to solve the nuclear dispute peacefully, but all options are open. "They seem to be sustained only by an irrational fear of the US, and an equally irrational adulation of their own leadership, both of which they have been taught for decades in complete isolation from the rest of the world," Hubbard said. An ROK presidential adviser said that the DPRK has shown no signs of reactivating a nuclear reprocessing facility that could enable the production of bombs within months.

3. Japan DPRK Threat

CNN News ("JAPAN REVISES NORTH KOREA THREAT," Tokyo, 03/17/03) reported that in the face of a perceived threat from the DPRK, Japan is considering bolstering its spy ship presence in the sea shared by the two countries. A Japanese defense spokesman said the country may boost the number of missile-detecting destroyers deployed near the DPRK from one to three amid jitters over a possible ballistic missile launch by Pyongyang, Kyodo News Agency said. As concerns mount over the threat the DPRK poses to East Asia, Japan says it is considering upping its missile defense systems. "There is no point in having the Aegis ships, each costing more than 100 billion yen ($850 million), if they are not brought to the Sea of Japan at a time when Japan's national security is being threatened by North Korea," the agency on Friday quoted a government official as saying. Japan has four 7,250-tonne ships equipped with the state-of-the-art Aegis radar system, which is capable of detecting more than 2,000 aircraft or missiles several hundred km (miles) away. The agency said the latest moves would raise the state of alert against the DPRK to one of its highest levels ever.

4. PRC Pneumonia Outbreak Origin

The Washington Post (Rob Stein, "FLU-LIKE ILLNESS THAT KILLS SPURS GLOBAL ALERT," 03/17/03), the New York Times (Keith Bradsher, "TALLY OF ILLNESS CASES DOUBLED IN HONG KONG," Hong Kong, 03/17/03) and the Washington Post (John Pomfret and Peter S. Goodman, "OUTBREAK ORIGINATED IN CHINA ILLNESS PEAKED A MONTH AGO, AGENCY TOLD; OFFICIAL MEDIA SILENT," Beijing, 03/17/03) reported that the World Health Organization issued an emergency global alert yesterday, warning that a mysterious, sometimes fatal pneumonia-like illness posed a worldwide threat after spreading from Asia to Europe and North America. More than 400 people have been sickened by the disease since the respiratory illness surfaced in China, including at least 150 new cases in the last week alone, officials said. The deadly pneumonia-like illness originated in southern PRC in November and peaked a month ago, according to a report the PRC government provided to WHO officials. The outbreak sparked months of panic buying of vinegar, herbal remedies and antibiotics in the PRC. Epidemiologists suspect it is the same illness seen over the past two weeks in Hong Kong, Vietnam, Canada, Germany, Thailand, Taiwan, the Philippines, Singapore and Indonesia. The illness, which originated in Guangdong province, sickened about 300 people in the PRC, with five dying. In the subsequent wave in other countries, about 200 people have become ill, including 43 new cases reported Saturday in Vietnam. There have been fewer than 10 deaths in the second wave, although many people are still critically ill. No cases have been identified in the US, health officials said.

5. PRC Iraq Embassy Evacuation

The Associated Press ("CHINA ANNOUNCES EVACUATION OF EMBASSY IN IRAQ," Beijing, 03/17/03) reported that the PRC was evacuating its embassy staff in Iraq on Monday due to the "looming war," the official Xinhua News Agency reported. The order for Ambassador Zhang Weiqiu and six other officials to leave followed evacuation orders by a number of countries amid the "tense atmosphere of a looming war," Xinhua said. It said six PRC reporters also were leaving - two from Xinhua, three from PRC state television and one from an unidentified Hong Kong news outlet.

6. Japan on UN Iraq Resolution

The Japan Times ("ATTACK MANDATE VALID: KOIZUMI," 03/17/03) reported that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi indicated Monday that he believes the US already has enough of a U.N. Security Council mandate to go to war in Iraq. He suggested that an attack could be waged on the basis of previous UNSC resolutions, including resolution 1441, which states that Iraq "will face serious consequences as a result of its continued violations of its obligations." Koizumi indicated that no fresh resolution is necessary after the US, Britain and Spain set a Monday deadline for a diplomatic solution to the Iraq standoff. The standoff is over how aggressive the international community should be in dethroning Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and seizing his suspected weapons of mass destruction.

7. Japan Iraq Human Shields

The Japan Times ("FOUR 'HUMAN SHIELDS' FROM JAPAN TO REMAIN IN IRAQ EVEN AFTER ATTACK," 03/17/03) reported that four Japanese people intend to remain in Iraq to act as "human shields" even after a military strike is launched, Foreign Ministry officials said Monday. The four are among 69 Japanese who were still in Iraq as of Monday despite the looming war, the officials said. They are mostly with the United Nations, nongovernmental organizations and news organizations, the officials added. The ministry is trying to persuade the four peace activists to leave Iraq immediately, telephoning relatives to urge them to get out, the officials said. It is also trying to dissuade other Japanese planning to go to Iraq to serve as human shields, they said. Staff of the embassy in Baghdad have already left the country, and the government has been urging other Japanese to leave immediately, the officials said.

8. Japan Domestic Economy

The Associated Press ("JAPAN SAYS ECONOMY FLAT IN MARCH," Tokyo, 03/17/03) reported that the Japanese government raised its assessment of the economy for the first time since July despite uncertainties over a possible war in Iraq. In its report for March, the Cabinet Office said Monday the economy was essentially flat, citing stronger investments in the corporate sector. In the report for February, it had said the economy was weak. The report said corporate profits are improving, although private consumption is flat and the unemployment rate remains high. As in previous reports, Japan said the economy is expected to recover if the rebound in the US and other economies can continue. Japan's recovery is dependent on exports, and worries have been growing that a war in Iraq could hurt spending in the US, crippling the chances for the world's second largest economy to get back on a stable turnaround track.

II. Republic of Korea

1. ROK's Credit Rating by Moody's

Joongang Ilbo (Koh Hyun-kohn, "BUT AIDES SAY MOODY'S MAY STILL CUT CREDIT MARK," Seoul, 03/16/03) reported a senior Finance Ministry official said Sundays that the credit rating agency Moody's Investors Service might downgrade ROK's assessment unless there is progress in the effort to resolve DPRK's nuclear problem soon. The possibility was communicated to senior South Korean finance officials who accompanied the Blue House adviser for foreign affairs, Ban Ki-moon, to US last week, the official said. Defense officials were also part of the trip, the purpose of which, ROK government officials said, was primarily to meet with US financial industry representatives and to explain the geopolitical conditions here that might affect the economy. The finance ministry official said ROK's delegation assured Moody's officials of visible progress on the issue in the next two months. He also described the concern at Moody's that rising tension on the Korean Peninsula and deteriorating relations between ROK and US could eventually lead to war. The envoys explained the unlikelihood of such a series of events, the official said, adding that the American financial sector seems more concerned about that risk than people in Korea itself do. Moody's downgraded the outlook for Korea's sovereign rating by two notches to "negative" last month, but it did not change Korea's A3 rating last Thursday when it announced new international assessments. Moody's will send another delegation to ROK in mid-April for an on-the-spot inspection. That trip will lead to an updated assessment; the "negative" outlook Moody's now has means that the firm is likely to downgrade the rating as a next step if the situation stays as it now is.

2. DPRK Nuclear Issue

Chosun Ilbo (Shim Jae-yun, "NK SHOW NO SIGNS OF NUKE REPROCESSING," Seoul, 03/16/03) reported that DPRK has shown no signs of reactivating a nuclear reprocessing facility capable of producing nuclear weapons, a senior Foreign Affairs-Trade Ministry official said Sunday. Nor has DPRK shown any moves to test-fire ballistic missiles that will escalate tensions on the Korean peninsula and in Northeast Asia, the official said, asking not be identified. "The United States, on its part, has not conveyed any information regarding possible provocative acts to us,'' the official said. There has been anxiety that the reclusive DPRK might attempt to reprocess spent fuel rods at the nuclear processing facility to produce weapons-grade plutonium in a bid to press US into direct dialogue. Another official from the ministry renewed the government's stance that DPRK needs to accept the idea of multinational negotiation first as an initial step to entering into direct dialogue with the US. DPRK Sunday continued to censure the US, raising the issue of annual ROK-US military exercises now underway, calling them steps to prepare for a war against DPRK.

3. Inter Korean Labor Union Relations

Chosun Ilbo (Mun Gap-sik, "LABOR LEADERS BACK FROM PYEONYANG," Seoul, 03/16/03) reported that representatives of the nation's two big labor union groups, returning from a trip last week to Pyeongyang, said Monday that they would celebrate May Day this year in the North Korean capital with their Northern counterparts. Officials from the Federation of Korean Trade Unions and the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions were in Pyeongyang from last Tuesday to Saturday for a conference, the South-North Korean Laborers' Meeting for Unification 2003. The officials agreed at the meeting on a variety of joint events to celebrate the May 1 holiday, including a six-kilometer running race. The groups also said that a soccer match between South and North Korean workers would be held in Seoul soon. Leading the talks, which sought to promote more exchanges between the two countries, were Chairman Lee Nam-soon of the Federation of Korean Trade Unions, Yoo Duk-sang of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, and Yeom Soon-kil, an executive from DPRK's Chosun Occupation Federation. ROK's delegation consisted of 27 persons. They were able to visit the mythically significant Mount Baekdu during their stay.

III. People's Republic of China

1. PRC-US Relations

China Daily (Zhao Huanxin, "SPACE SCIENTISTS DENY RECEIVING LEAKED US DATA," 03/14/03, P1) reported that Chinese scientists on March 3 categorically denied that they had been leaked any sensitive data on space technology from US firms, adding that they hoped Sino-US co-operation on commercial satellite launches will return to normal. On March 5, two US companies - the Hughes Electronics Corp and Boeing Satellite Systems - agreed to pay a US$32 million civil penalty to settle US Government charges that they had provided "sensitive" technical data to PRC following several failed rocket launches in the 1990s. According to Long Lehao, chief designer of PRC's Long March 3B rocket, in the case of the Intelsat launch, Chinese scientists initially sorted out the general causes of the accident within 10 hours of the blast, and in the following six months, they conducted experiments to confirm the results and came up with 256 countermeasures. As for the APSTAR II blast, PRC presented an accident analysis 10 days after the satellite exploded and six months before a US analytical report came out, according to Mu Shan, former deputy general engineer at the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in Southwest China's Sichuan Province. Mu said PRC has strictly abided by agreements signed with the US regarding technological safety in the course of conducting commercial launch services. Long also said: "China has neither the need to acquire, nor the possibility of acquiring, so-called 'sensitive technologies' from the United Statesiwe are capable of independently developing rockets - which I believe are among the world's top in terms of reliability - and we are equally capable of finding and fixing any problems that occur. We know our rockets every bit as much a mother knows her baby."

People's Daily ("JIANG, BUSH TALK OVER PHONE," Beijing, 03/11/03, P1) reported that Chinese President Jiang Zemin discussed over phone the nuclear issue of the DPRK and the Iraq issue with US President George W. Bush on March 10. Bush said the US attaches importance to PRC's stand on the nuclear issue and is ready to achieve denuclearization in the Korean Peninsula through multilateral efforts. On the nuclear issue of the DPRK, Jiang said PRC hopes that various sides should keep calm and avoid actions that may make the situation tenser. PRC approves the US intention of addressing related matters peacefully through dialogue, Jiang said. The form of dialogue is not the most important, the key is that whether both sides have sincerity, whether the dialogue has substantial content and result, whether it is favorable to the denuclearization in the peninsula, to solving the matters which the US and the DPRK care about and to safeguarding the peace and stability of the peninsula, Jiang said according to the report.

2. US-DPRK Relations

People's Daily ("US TO RESUME SPY FLIGHTS NEAR DPRK," Beijing, 03/14/03, P9) reported that the US is resuming reconnaissance flights in areas near the DPRK despite the alleged intercept of a US reconnaissance plane by DPRK fighter jets earlier this month, US officials said March 12. The officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity, did not clarify whether such flights had actually resumed but only said that the US military has plans to send RC-135 reconnaissance planes back to their spy missions in international air space off the DPRK. Instead of being escorted by fighter jets, the reconnaissance planes will be watched over by US Navy warships and AWACS military radar planes, the officials said in the report.

3. US-ROK Relations

People's Daily (Xu Baokang, "US AIRCRAFT CARRIER AND STEALTH FIGHTERS ARRIVE S.KOREA FOR JOINT WAR GAMES," Seoul, 03/16/03, P7) reported that US navy aircraft carrier Carl Vinson and Six US F-117 stealth fighters arrived Gunsan Air Base, some 300 kilometers southwest of Seoul, on March 14. The aircraft and fighters will attend the ROK-US RSOI (Reception, Staging, Onward Movement and Integration) war games slated on March 19-26. The two allies kicked off the Foal Eagle military exercise last Tuesday, said the report.

China Daily ("SEOUL DENIES REPORT OF SURPRISE RAID ON DPRK," Seoul, 03/14/03, P12) reported that the ROK Government on March 13 denied a report that the US sounded out Seoul on the idea of a surprising bombing raid on a key nuclear complex in the DPRK. "The government has heard nothing about this idea from any official of the US administration and understands that the US Government is not reviewing this option," Seok Tong-youn, a spokesman for the ROK Trade and Foreign Affairs Ministry, said in a statement. The denial came after ROK's Internet newspaper OhmyNews reported earlier in the day that a high-level US State Department official in February discussed the subject of a military strike on the DPRK city of Yongbyon with an anonymous ROK Government official. Seok said that US and ROK shared the view that the nuclear issue should be resolved peacefully through diplomacy.

China Daily ("SEOUL URGES US ACTION," Seoul, 03/13/03, P12) reported that the ROK called on the US on March 12 to be "more active" in finding a solution to the five-month-old nuclear issue, like lobbying US to be more flexible and drop its opposition to direct talks with the DPRK to resolve the stand-off. "Our position is that no matter what form the talks could take, the United States should be more active in showing its will to resolve the issue with the North," Foreign Minister Yoon Young-kwan told KBS-1 public radio.

4. PRC's Stance on Counter-terrorism

People's Daily ("CHINA SUPPORTS IAEA'S EFFORTS AGAINST POTENTIAL NUCLEAR TERRORISM," Vienna, 03/14/03, P9) reported that PRC supports the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) contribution to the efforts against potential nuclear terrorism and attaches great importance to the security of radioactive sources, said Xu Yuming, vice-chairman of China Atomic Energy Authority, told the International Conference on Security of Radioactive Sources on March 12. PRC fights against all kinds of terrorism, including nuclear terrorism, and believes that every government has the duty to fight nuclear terrorism, said Xu. The Chinese Government maintains that while the international community, including the IAEA, actively implements the preventive measures against nuclear terrorism, the co-operation in the area of the peaceful use of nuclear energy should be promoted, Xu said. Noting that technical co-operation with and support for developing countries should be expanded, Xu said PRC also attaches great importance to the security of radioactive sources, according to the report.

5. PRC's Stance on DPRK Issue

China Daily ("RESTRAINT CALLED FOR AFTER DPRK MISSILE TEST," 03/12/03, P1) reported that Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan on March 11 expressed the hope that all parties will exercise restraint to prevent tension on the Korean Peninsula from further escalating. Kong's comment, made during a regular briefing, came in the wake of Monday's missile test by the DPRK into the sea off its coast. Kong said that PRC was open to all ideas that may achieve a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula, and ensure peace and stability on the Peninsula and a practical settlement between the parties concerned.

6. DPRK-ROK Relations

China Daily ("INTER-KOREAN RAIL BACK ON TRACK," Seoul, 03/13/03, P11) reported that the ROK and the DPRK on March 12 said they had agreed to resume work on a cross-border railway this month aimed at restoring inter-Korean rail links for the first time in five decades. The accord, reached after three days of negotiations which ended in the DPRK on March 11, says the work "will start late in March from the military demarcation line inside the demilitarized zone (DMZ)" which divides the north and the south, the ROK's unification ministry said in a statement. The DPRK's official Korean Central News Agency, which also confirmed the accord, said there would be a ceremony to mark the resumption of work at "the end of March" inside the DMZ, a border drawn after the 1950-53 Korean War.

7. Another Test Missile Fired by DPRK

China Daily ("ANOTHER TEST MISSILE FIRED BY DPRK," Seoul, 03/11/03, P12) reported that the DPRK on March 10 test-fired a missile into the sea off its coast around midday, the ROK announced. ROK Defense Ministry spokesman Kim Ki-Beom said the missile was believed to be an anti-ship missile similar to one that the DPRK test-fired on February 24. ROK was trying to determine whether the new test was successful, reports in Seoul said. The launch was also confirmed by the Japanese Government, and Japanese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hatsuhisa Takashima said that: "We understand this was not a ballistic missile and therefore is not considered a direct threat to Japan." The DPRK on March 10 sought to justify its interception of an American spy plane by four fighter jets in international air-space as a defensive act. "We cannot stand by and watch the aggressive attempts by the US army," said a commentary in the government Rodong Sinmun newspaper in Pyongyang.

8. Relations Across Taiwan Straits

China Daily ("EUROPE'S INVITATION TO CHEN CONDEMNED," 03/17/03, P1) reported that PRC deeply regrets and firmly opposes an invitation issued by the Conference of Presidents of the European Parliament (CPEP) to Taiwan's Chen Shui-bian to attend its meeting and make a speech on March 26. A spokesman for the first session of the 10th National People's Congress (NPC) commented on such decision in Beijing on March 15. The Taiwan question is central to China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and concerns all Chinese people, including Taiwan compatriots, he said. While the Chinese Government is devoted to achieving peaceful reunification of the motherland by implementing the policy of "one country, two systems," Taiwan's leader Chen Shui-bian refuses to accept the one-China principle and instead advocates "one country on each side" (of the Taiwan Straits) and wants to separate Taiwan from China, he said. By adhering to his stance of "Taiwan independence" and carrying out separatist activities, Chen poses the greatest threat to peace and stability in the region, he said. In another development, according to a China News Service report, Lee said on March 15 at an annual session of a pro-Taiwan independence organization that the most important task for Taiwan now is to change its name from the present "Republic of China" to "Taiwan." Taiwan politicians have criticized Lee Teng-hui for his remarks, said the report.

China Daily (Shao Zongwei, "UNITED STATES WARNED NOT TO SEND WRONG SIGNALS TO TAIWAN," 03/14/03, P1) reported that PRC on March 13 said that it is "strongly displeased and firmly opposed" to a visit to Taiwan by a Pentagon official to discuss anti-missile co-operation and US weapons sales to the island. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan said in a press release the military exchanges and co-operation between the US and Taiwan have violated the principles of

past communiques. Warning that this week's move will send the wrong signals to Taiwan independence forces, Kong urged the US to clearly recognize the damage it could cause on such a sensitive issue. The US should adhere to the promises it has made on the issue to avoid impairing its relations with PRC, said Kong. It has been reported that a group of 10 officials from the US led by Mary Tighe, chief in charge of Asia- Pacific security affairs at the US Department of Defense, arrived in Taipei early this week to evaluate Taiwan's defense capability. Kong also said PRC opposed the passing of a bill by the US House of Representatives to support Taiwan's participation in the World Health Organization (WHO).

IV. Japan

1. Japan on War against Iraq

Kyodo ("JAPAN FEARS FOR AUTHORITY OF U.N.," New York, 03/14/03) reported that the authority and effectiveness of the United Nations will be gravely compromised if it fails to adopt the new Iraq resolution proposed by the US, Britain and Spain, Japan said Wednesday. Ambassador Koichi Haraguchi laid out Japan's position on the second day of an open debate at the UN Security Council, with 55 countries that are not members of the council and international organizations expressing their views on the Iraqi situation. Haraguchi reiterated Japan's support for the revised draft of the US-backed resolution and said Iraq needs to realize it is "being pressed to make a decision whether or not to take this final opportunity."

The Japan Times (Junko Takahashi, "KOIZUMI STAYS COY ON IRAQ STANDOFF STRATEGY," 03/14/03) reported that the Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi kept his cards close to his vest over the Iraq standoff Thursday, despite opposition leaders' criticism of his support for an US-backed UN resolution on the matter. Koizumi held separate meetings with Naoto Kan of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), Ichiro Ozawa of the Liberal Party, Tetsuzo Fuwa of the Japanese Communist Party and Takako Doi of the Social Democratic Party at the Prime Minister's Official Residence during the day. During these talks, he kept his own counsel over whether he would support a military attack on Iraq without UN backing. Speaking at a news conference, Ozawa quoted Koizumi as saying that Japan's conduct in the event of a unilateral US military offensive would be decided by "the atmosphere" of the time. When asked about these comments later in the day, Koizumi denied implying that Japan would support such an attack. "There was nothing clear about what he said," Kan told reporters after his meeting with the prime minister. According to Fuwa, Koizumi admitted that supporting the US-backed resolution means that Japan supports terminating the inspection process on the March 17 deadline. " 'That means a war,' I said, but he made no response to that," Fuwa told reporters. "Calling the resolution 'pressure for a peaceful solution' (to the Iraq issue) is a lie. It's a deception." Doi urged Koizumi to hold a Diet plenary session Friday to explain Japan's stance to the public. "He said he would consider it, but seemed negative about it," she said.

The Japan Times (Junko Takahashi and Kanako Takahara, "PUBLIC OPINION DISREGARDED ON IRAQ," 03/15/03) reported that the Japanese government appears to be disregarding public opinion in Japan and siding with American sentiment in shaping Japan's stance toward a possible US-led war on Iraq. At a news conference Friday, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda said, "US public opinion cannot be ignored," when asked about surging anti-French sentiment in Washington, where Capitol Hill restaurants renamed "French fries" on menus as "Freedom fries." Fukuda made the comment while criticizing French moves to veto a six-point British proposal to force Iraq to disarm. But asked if public opinion in Japan, which is reportedly 80 percent opposed to an attack on Iraq, counts for anything when the government decides whether to express its support in the event of an

attack, Fukuda said public opinion in Japan can change over time. "Public opinion up to now and public opinion in the future may be different," he said. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi told a news conference, "If France opposes every proposal (submitted to the council), I wonder if it is making any effort to settle the situation. [...] If so, France should seek ways to reach a compromise."

The Japan Times ("PLANS DRAWN UP TO REACT TO IRAQ WAR," 03/16/03) reported that the Japanese government has drawn up an outline of measures it will take at home and overseas in the event the US goes to war with Iraq, according to government sources. The plans call for protecting Japanese nationals, aiding refugees and surrounding countries, preventing economic turmoil in Japan and other countries and possibly aiding Iraq in its rebuilding process. At the same time, security in Japan will be stepped up at nuclear power stations, airports and seaports in light of the possibility of terrorist attacks, the sources said. Measures will also be taken to prevent attacks against US military sites and US-related facilities in Japan. According to the plans, government-chartered planes and aircraft from the Self-Defense Forces will be dispatched to those countries if the situation deteriorates. In terms of aid to displaced people, Japan will send tents, blankets and food to refugees -- expected to number between 600,000 and 1.4 million. Under the plan, Japan will announce aid of up to 1.3 billion yen to Jordan, Turkey, Egypt, Syria and the Palestinian authority to help alleviate the impact of refugees and to prevent a negative effect on the Middle East peace process. For Iraqi reconstruction, the government plans to play an active role and will cooperate with the World Bank in rebuilding infrastructure in Iraq, according to the outline.

The Mainichi Shimbun ("JAPAN TO SUPPORT WAR BY PAST U.N. RESOLUTIONS," 03/16/03) reported that past resolutions of the UN Security Council would provide ground for the Japanese government to support a possible US-led war against Iraq without a new resolution. The government bears three resolutions in mind; the resolution 678 in November 1990 to authorize war on Iraq, the resolution 687 in April 1991 on a cease-fire of the Gulf War, and the resolution 1441 in November 2002 to afford Iraq "a final opportunity" to disarm. The government's strategy to stress Iraq's breach of these UN resolutions aims to avoid criticism that the government has too heavily relied on the Japan-US alliance. The Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi rejected on Friday the idea that war without a new UN resolution breaches the UN Charter, saying, "Washington says the resolution 1441 is enough. The interpretation of UN resolutions depends on each country."

The Asahi Shimbun ("TOKYO GETS SET FOR IRAQ ACTION," 03/17/03) reported that the Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi will declare Japan's support for US and Britain as soon as war starts. Japan plans to help out with refugees displaced after an attack on Iraq but will not likely provide logistics support for the war nor share its cost, according to measures drawn up by the government, sources said over the weekend. Officials believe making Japan's stand clear in the early stages of the war will be the best way to demonstrate Japan's support for the US since Japan will not actually participate in the attack. The government also plans to compile concrete plans for helping Iraqis rebuild their country after the war. Japan is considering sending the SDF to repair bridges and roads and providing medical care even if UN-backed peacekeeping operations are not organized for post-war Iraq. Since the current peacekeeping cooperation law limits Japan to peacekeeping activities directly under the auspices of the UN, the government is considering adopting new legal measures to allow such a move.

2. International Anti-war Movement

The Japan Times ("ANTIWAR PROTESTS CONTINUE AS JAPAN BACKS WASHINGTON," 03/17/03) reported that tens of thousands of people took part in weekend protests against a possible US-led war against Iraq. Displaying an antiwar banner, a giant concrete mixer leads a convoy of 200

vehicles from an industrial waste disposal site in Osaka, for a downtown demonstration. Some 1,200 concrete industry union members took part in the protest. About 10,000 people rallied in Tokyo on Saturday, according to organizers, later marching through the Ginza shopping district waving banners emblazoned with the phrase "Peace to the World." Demonstrations organized by numerous citizens' groups were also staged in Osaka and Nagoya as part of an international protest against war. In Okinawa, which hosts the bulk of US forces in Japan, organizers said 5,500 people thronged a park in Naha to oppose an US-led war on Iraq. In Tokyo, some 200 people attended a meeting at Sophia University to hear journalists warn against the imposition of new controls on the media.

The Japan Times (Yumi Wijers-Hasegawa, "INTERNATIONAL NGO URGES JAPAN TO STOP BACKING IRAQ ATTACK," 03/15/03) reported that Jeremy Hobbs, executive director of Oxfam International, a British-based non-governmental organization, on Friday urged the Japanese government to understand that a war on Iraq would trigger a major humanitarian disaster. "We are not happy that the Japanese government is using aid programs to put pressure on US Security Council members," he said. "Aid is something to be used for poverty reduction. We refuse to receive any money (for our humanitarian work in Iraq) from belligerent governments such as Japan during the war on Iraq." With the threat of war looming in Iraq, Hobbs said he is particularly concerned that public lifelines such as water, electricity and traffic systems will be targeted in precision attacks, as is often the case in military conflicts. "(Iraq's) water supply and sewage systems, which are already in poor condition after decades of war, could worsen, causing disastrous consequences for the health of the people, such as cholera outbreak," Hobbs said. Equipment such as water filtration systems and sanitation are already on palettes at Oxfam headquarters that can be airlifted to Iraq within 24 hours, he added. "We are still working hard to try to avert war," he said. The group is preparing a letter to Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi and hopes to hand it to her by Monday.

3. US Bases in Japan

The Japan Times ("GROUP CLAIMS RESPONSIBILITY FOR ATTACK ON U.S. AIR BASE," 03/17/03) reported that a statement claiming responsibility for the firing of projectiles last week at an US air base and the Defense Agency has been received by a Japanese newspaper, it was learned Sunday. The statement, issued by the "revolutionary army," was received by the newspaper Saturday and dated the same day, according to police sources. It claims that the group will block an overseas dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces and an US-led war against Iraq, they said.

Mainichi Daily News ("DRUNK U.S. BASE WORKER KILLS MAN IN OKINAWA CAR CRASH," Nago, 03/17/03) reported that a civilian worker at an US military base in Okinawa was arrested after he drove his vehicle into an oncoming car while drunk, killing the driver, police said. The worker was a civilian for a firm on Camp Hansen, a US military base in Okinawa.

4. US on Japan's Economy

Kyodo ("U.S. EXPRESSES FEARS ABOUT JAPAN ECONOMY," Washington, 03/16/03) reported that the US is fairly optimistic about the global economic impact of a possible war with Iraq, but it is concerned about Japan's sluggish economy, an US administration official said. "The broader question is obviously the Japanese economy does remain weak and the future uncertain, and we remain concerned about that," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. The US administration will continue to support Japan's efforts to fight deflation, clean up bad loans in the banking sector and promote corporate restructuring, according to the official. He added that the US hopes Japan's planned Industrial Revitalization Corp. will help promote the disposal of bad loans and encourage corporate restructuring. The new idea "could be an important part of the solution to the problem,

but we are waiting to see what the details of that scheme" are, he said.

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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