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I. United States

1. PRC-DPRK Secret Talks

Agence France-Presse ("NKOREAN LEADER KIM LAUNCHES SECRET VISIT TO CHINA: REPORTS," 04/19/04) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-Il has begun a secret visit to the PRC for talks with PRC leaders with the DPRK's nuclear drive high on the agenda, media reports said. A train carrying the reclusive Kim left Pyongyang and entered PRC territory via the DPRK border city of Shinunju late Sunday. Kim is expected to arrive in Beijing on Tuesday or Wednesday for talks with PRC leaders, including President Hu Jintao, Yonhap said, without elaborating on concrete schedules.

Agence France-Presse ("NKOREA'S KIM HOLDS TALKS WITH HU IN BEIJING ON NUCLEAR ISSUE," 04/18/04) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-Il held talks with President Hu Jintao centred

on nuclear issues days after the US cited intelligence that Pyongyang had atomic bombs, reports said. Kim and a 30- to 40-strong entourage arrived for the unannounced four-day visit to the PRC capital by train amid tight security, disembarking ahead of Beijing Station for security reasons. The talks took place over lunch at Zhongnanhai and focused on the nuclear standoff, the PRC's economic assistance to the DPRK and their economic reform. The PRC declined to confirm the visit, saying it had "no official information." DPRK embassy staff also refused to confirm Kim was in Beijing.

Reuters ("NORTH KOREA MAY DITCH ATOMIC PLAN IF US CHANGES - REPORT," Seoul, 04/20/04) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il told PRC leaders he was ready to give up the DPRK's nuclear programs if the US changed its "hostile attitude", a ROK newspaper reported on Tuesday. Kim arrived unannounced in Beijing on Monday for talks with PRC President Hu Jintao and other PRC leaders on the crisis over North Korea's nuclear weapons ambitions and its threadbare economy. "Kim reportedly explained the reasons behind the nuclear weapons to Hu and added that the DPRK is willing to give up nuclear developments if the US changes its hostile attitude," the Chosun Ilbo, the ROK's biggest daily, said. The newspaper quoted a PRC source, who also said the PRC had agreed to give the DPRK energy and food aid. Another newspaper, the Dong-a Ilbo, said there were rumors that the DPRK would soon make an announcement that could signal a breakthrough in resolving the nuclear crisis. "Some even speculate that Kim might have told Hu that North Korea has shifted its position," the Dong-a Ilbo said. It did not give sources for these suggestions.

2. US Cheney Asia Visit Conclusion Agence France-Presse ("CHENEY WINDS UP ASIAN TOUR WITH CALL FOR SUPPORT ON IRAQ, NORTH KOREA," 04/16/04) reported that US Vice President Dick Cheney has wound up a three-nation Asian tour with a call to allies to step up support for US forces in Iraq and curb nuclear-armed DPRK. Following talks with senior officials here Cheney insisted that the DPRK's nuclear weapons drive had to end and that US-led military action would eventually free millions of Iraqis from oppression. "Our work in Iraq will ensure a better life for 25 million people and help enhance democracy in a country that has known generations of repression," Cheney told US troops based here prior to departing for Washington. Cheney, who arrived here after visits to Japan and the PRC, said he had "a very good round of talks" with ROK acting president Goh Kun and other senior leaders. "Our alliance, formed half a century ago, is vital and strong," the vice president said, thanking thye ROK for agreeing to deploy more than 3,000 troops to Iraq in addition to 200 soldiers already stationed in Afghanistan. "We applaud your brave decision to support the cause of freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq," Cheney said.

3. ROK Presidential Impeachment

Agence France-Presse ("ROK OPPOSITION REJECTS CALL TO SCRAP PRESIDENT'S IMPEACHMENT," 04/16/04) reported that ROK opposition leader Park Geun-Hye has rejected calls to scrap the impeachment of President Roh Moo-Hyun despite a massive show of support for Roh in parliamentary elections. The pro-Roh Uri Party seized control of parliament in Thursday's poll seen as a referendum on the March 12 vote to impeach the president. The Uri Party and the Korea Democratic Labor Party urged the opposition Grand National Party (GNP) to drop the impeachment drive against the liberal president. Suspended from office, Roh is now awaiting a ruling by the Constitutional Court which has six months to endorse impeachment and call for a new presidential election or to reject it and restore him to power. Analysts said the victory of the pro-Roh party would likely influence the outcome of the court deliberations in his favour and increase his chances of reinstatement. Uri Party's floor leader Kim Keun-Tae urged the GNP and the Millennium Democratic Party to reverse their impeachment drive. However, Park said the court case should run its course. "That case has already been transferred to the Constitutional Court and politicians should wait for

the court's decision and respect whatever decision it will make," she told journalists. "It is not desirable for the National Assembly to intervene in the case being handled by the Constitutional Court."

4. KEDO Japan Visit

Kyodo ("KEDO CHIEF TO VISIT JAPAN FROM TUES TO DISCUSS REACTOR PROJECT," Tokyo, 04/19/04) reported that Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) chief Charles Kartman will visit Japan from Tuesday to discuss the fate of the suspended project to build two light-water nuclear reactors in the DPRK and other issues related to the North's nuclear programs, Foreign Ministry officials said Monday. Kartman, KEDO's executive director, will meet with Vice Foreign Minister Yukio Takeuchi and other Japanese officials on Wednesday, the officials said. He will leave for Seoul on Thursday. Kartman and the Japanese officials are expected to exchange views on the fate of the KEDO project.

5. Iraq Japanese Abduction Victims Return Home

Agence France-Presse ("TWO REMAINING JAPANESE FREED IN IRAQ AS THREE COMPATRIOTS PREPARE TO GO HOME," 04/19/04) reported that two Japanese hostages in Iraq were freed as three compatriots, released two days earlier after a week in captivity under threat of execution, prepared to return home after a brief rest in Dubai. The release of freelance journalist Junpei Yasuda, 30, and peace activist Nobutaka Watanabe, 36, brought a peaceful end to the hostage crisis which had gripped Japan. Japanese diplomats in Dubai said late Saturday it appeared unlikely that the pair would also be flown to the Gulf emirate, but would not say what plans had been made for them. The possibility that they would be brought to Dubai had been raised after news of their release. But the diplomats said Japanese Senior Vice Foreign Minister Ichiro Aisawa, who headed a hostage crisis cell in Amman, was sticking to plans to fly back to Japan on the overnight flight taking the woman and two men freed on Thursday. "It's good news," Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi told reporters in Tokyo of the release of Yasuda and Watanabe. "The families must be relieved." Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi echoed Koizumi's sentiments. "I am glad both incidents were resolved," she said. "I am very much pleased and I express my heartfelt delight for their families."

6. EU on PRC Arms Ban

Agence France-Presse ("EU UNLIKELY TO ACCEDE TO CHINA OVER ARMS BAN IN MINISTERIAL TALKS," 04/18/04) reported that the European Union and the PRC were to hold talks here with Beijing pressing hard for the bloc to lift an arms embargo in place since the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989. But EU sources said PRC Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing was unlikely to get the news he wants when he meets officials including Irish Foreign Minister Brian Cowen, whose country holds the EU's rotating presidency. France initiated the push to lift the ban, supported by Germany. But they face opposition notably from Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands, which argue the PRC needs to do much more to safeguard human rights. Europe also faces pressure from the US, which firmly opposes ending the embargo.

7. PRC Tiananmen Square Anniversary Preparation

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA INVOKES EMERGENCY SECURITY FOR TIANANMEN SQUARE AHEAD OF ANNIVERSARY," 04/19/04) reported that the PRC has invoked emergency security measures in and around Tiananmen Square to prevent protests as the 15th anniversary of its

crackdown against pro-democracy campaigners draws near, state media said. The new regulations, which go into effect Tuesday, are designed to maintain "sound, stable social order in the area" and enforce "rigid control so as to prepare for any emergency," Xinhua news agency reported. It stated that "any activities affecting social order, public security and the environment in the Tiananmen area will be banned and penalized". PRC officials and police have expressed concern over social unrest on the 15th anniversary of the protests, which began in April 1989 and culminated with a bloody crushing on June 4. The decision to step up security also comes ahead of the week-long Labour Day holiday starting May 1 when hundreds of thousands of PRC are expected to visit the vast esplanade.

8. Taiwan World Health Organization Bid Agence France-Presse ("TAIWAN TO PRESS FOR FRESH WHO BID DESPITE CHINA'S OBJECTION," 04/19/04) reported that Taiwan is planning to renew its bid to join the World Health Organisation (WHO) as an observer despite seeing seven previous attempts blocked by the PRC, an official said. Taiwan's foreign ministry spokesman Richard Shih stated that the island would apply for membership once more when the World Health Assembly meets in Geneva on May 17. "Preparation has been underway, but it is not proper to unveil details at this moment," Shih said.

II. Japan

1. Japan Hostage Crisis

Mainichi Daily News ("HOSTAGE DRAMA PROMPTS JAPAN TO PONDER 'DANGEROUS TRAVEL' BAN," 04/16/04) reported that the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) has begun discussing legislation to ban Japanese nationals from visiting dangerous countries. However, as Japan's Constitution guarantees freedom of movement to foreign countries, the general consensus is that such legislation would be impossible. The move by the LDP and its coalition partner, Komeito, has come just after three Japanese nationals were released on Thursday after being taken hostage in central Iraq last week. Sources said that the LDP and Komeito were discussing the legislation because a recurrence of such an abduction in Iraq or any other countries could hamper Japan's dispatch of its Self-Defense Forces to Iraq. Yukio Edano, policy chief of the opposition Democratic Party of Japan, went further to criticize the idea. "If the legislation comes with penalties, it would run counter to freedom of moving (to a foreign country) as guaranteed by the Constitution," Edano said.

Mainichi Daily News ("FREED JAPANESE HOSTAGES LEAVE IRAQ BUT VOW TO RETURN," 04/16/04) reported that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi criticized intentions of three Japanese abductees to stay or visit Iraq again because their capture caused a great deal of trouble to his government. "A great number of government officials made efforts to rescue them when they were in captivity," Koizumi said. "How can they say such a thing? I want them to think about their circumstances." But Takato, 34, a volunteer worker from Chitose, Hokkaido, also said she still loved Iraq when she and another former hostage, Soichiro Koriyama, gave an interview to Qatar-based satellite broadcaster Aljazeera on Thursday. "I had to endure unpleasant things. But I cannot hate the Iraqi people," a teary Takato told an Aljazeera reporter.

The Japan Times ("LAST OF JAPANESE HOSTAGES FREED IN IRAQ, 04/18/04) reported that two Japanese civilians who were taken hostage near Baghdad earlier last week were released last Saturday by their captors at a mosque in the capital, just like the three other compatriots freed on Thursday. Officials of the Japanese Embassy in Baghdad were present at the mosque when the two were handed over to Abdel Salem Al Kubaissi of the Islamic Clerics Association. After Japan confirmed that the two are freelance journalist Junpei Yasuda, 30, and an activist of Trans-Pacific

GI/SDF Rights Hotline Nobutaka Watanabe, 36, they were taken to the embassy. Watanabe told the Kyodo News that the pair were given a verbal message from their abductors in which they said "the United States and Britain are the enemies of Iraq, and we will continue to fight."

2. Japan Iraq Troops Dispatch

The Asahi Shimbun ("TOKYO RECONSIDERING IRAQI AID, DEBT RELIEF," 04/14/04) reported that Japan might delay plans to provide aid for Iraqi reconstruction because of deteriorating security there, including the kidnapping of three Japanese civilians. The government planned to provide low-interest loans and aid grants worth $5 billion (525 billion yen). The aid money was to help improve education, power and water supplies, and public health and hygiene through programs run by nongovernmental organizations and international groups. Meanwhile, Iraq owes the Japanese public sector about $4.1 billion in debts accumulated under the regime of Saddam Hussein. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, however, said last December that Japan was ready to forgive a significant portion of the debts. But if occupation forces fail to transfer power to the Iraqi people and establish an interim government by the June 30 deadline, any existing plans to rebuild the country's economy might fall apart. The continued instability would put debt-forgiveness programs on shaky ground.

3. Koizumi on US Presence in Iraq

The Japan Times (Tetsushi Kajimoto, "NO NEED FOR U.S. RESTRAINT, KOIZUMI SAYS," 04/15/04) reported that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said Wednesday that Japan need not ask the US to show restraint in dealing with the Sunni Muslim insurgents to help win the release of three Japanese hostages in Iraq. However, he said the hostage incident is "closely related" to the fighting in Fallujah between American troops and Sunni insurgents. During a one-on-one debate with opposition leaders in the House of Councilors, Koizumi said, "It's not a matter of whether to call for" the US troops to exercise restraint. He said the government must deal with the tense situation in Fallujah carefully because it concerns the hostages' safety. Koizumi also reiterated he has no intention of withdrawing Self-Defense Forces (SDF) troops deployed to Iraq. Naoto Kan, the leader of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), said the situation in Iraq is such that the government should consider withdrawing the SDF troops. He said there is a growing danger that combat could spread nationwide, preventing the SDF units from carrying out their activities in "non-combat zones."

4. Japan Yasukuni Shrine Controversy

Kyodo ("RULING ON KOIZUMI SHRINE VISIT TO GO UNCONTESTED," Fukuoka, 04/16/04) reported that the Fukuoka District Court's landmark ruling on April 7 that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's August 2001 visit to Yasukuni Shrine is unconstitutional will stand, with the plaintiffs deciding here Thursday not to appeal. The state and the prime minister, named as the defendants in the suit, have also decided not to appeal. They technically won the suit because the court rejected the plaintiffs' demand for damages. The ruling will not be legally binding because it involves a constitutional matter and was made at the district court level. Only Supreme Court rulings are binding on constitutional matters. Koizumi has said he will continue to visit the shrine despite the court ruling.

III. CanKor E-Clipping Service

1. Issue #160

US, Japanese and South Korean diplomats meet in private talks to strategize next steps in the DPRK nuclear dispute, but experts expect no substantial progress on the issue before US presidential elections in November 2004. The DPRK is willing to permit abductee family members to return to Japan and to resume normalization talks, Taku Yamasaki claims upon his return from secret meetings with high-ranking North Korean officials in Dalian, China. In a move described as a "strategic program for peace and prosperity", the RO Korea has signed a 50-year lease on a parcel of land in the Kaesong industrial zone. The leased plot will open in June to accommodate five to ten small South Korean companies seeking cheaper labour costs. Changes toward a more market-driven economy continue apace in the DPRK, albeit with mixed reviews. This week's FOCUS, "DPRK - open for business?" presents witness accounts of the sometimes humorous, sometimes awkward changes observed in the DPRK during a time of transition.

For more info: http://www.cankor.ca

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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