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I. United States

1. US Nuclear Weapons Development

The Associated Press (H. Josef Hebert, "LOW-YIELD NUCLEAR DEVICE CONSIDERED," Washington, 12/19/01) reported that US Defense officials are considering the possibility of developing a low-yield nuclear device that would be able to destroy deeply buried stockpiles of chemical or biological weapons. Such a move would require Congress to lift a 1994 ban on designing new nuclear warheads. In a report sent to Congress in October, the Defense Department said a low-yield, less than five-kiloton, nuclear warhead coupled with new technology that allows bombs to penetrate deep underground before exploding could prove effective in destroying biological and chemical agents. Martin Butcher, director of security programs at the Physicians for Social Responsibility expressed that this kind of warhead is "the dirtiest kind of all, as it's highly radioactive." Butcher said that the report is evidence that the Bush administration "is essentially doing all the preparation" for a future full-scale research and development program for a new mini-nuclear warhead. The report also said that enhancements expected to be completed by 2005 to an array of conventional weapons, including laser-guided bombs and cruise missiles, should be able to destroy most underground facilities. However, the report maintains that such weapons cannot penetrate the deepest facilities. The report also acknowledges that any decision to proceed with a nuclear device for attacking underground targets would be considered within the administration's

broader plans for the nuclear stockpile and overall nuclear weapons policy. A joint nuclear-planning board already has been established to examine the use of nuclear weapons as bunker-busters.

2. US-Russia Nuclear Arms Reduction

The Associated Press ("BUSH CALLS PUTIN ON ARMS REDUCTION," Washington, 12/19/01) reported that US President George W. Bush called Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday to discuss cooperation on reducing nuclear arms after US withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. White House spokesman Ari Fleischer stated that Bush and Putin discussed the developing a new arms framework, "including lowered numbers of nuclear weapons and greater transparency of mutual cooperation on defenses, if possible." The two leaders also discussed strengthening US-Russian economic ties, Fleischer said.

3. PRC-Afghanistan Diplomatic Relations

Reuters ("CHINESE TEAM REACHES KABUL AND PLANS TO REOPEN EMBASSY," Beijing, 12/20/01) and Deutsche Presse-Agentur ("CHINESE ENVOYS ARRIVE IN KABUL, PLAN FLAG-RAISING," Beijing, 12/19/01) reported that a team of PRC diplomats arrived on Wednesday in Kabul to meet officials of the transitional Afghan government and try to reopen their embassy for the first time since 1993. Senior Foreign Ministry official Zhang Min stated, "We are planning to inspect our embassy buildings and try to resume our diplomatic mission. We will also hold a flag raising ceremony." The US reopened its embassy in Kabul on Monday. Britain, France, Germany, India, Iran, Italy, Russia and Turkey have either sent diplomats or are preparing to return and forge links with the interim administration.

4. ROK Presidential Elections

The Associated Press (Yoo Jae-suk, "DICTATOR'S DAUGHTER WANTS TO BE LEADER," Seoul, 12/19/01) and The New York Times (Don Kirk, "CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT INVOKES KOREA OF HER FATHER," Seoul, 12/19/01) reported that Park Geun-hye, the eldest daughter of assassinated ROK President Park Chung-hee, announced that she will compete for the presidential nomination of the main opposition Grand National Party. Park stated, "I would like to carry on the legacy of my father and achieve what he did not achieve in his lifetime, democratization." Analysts say that chances are slim for Park, who is in her third year in politics as a national legislator. Moreover, Park's gender makes her a unique figure in male-dominated ROK politics. However, Park commented, "I don't think I'm disadvantaged just because I'm a woman. It has been so in the past, but the situation is improving."

II. Japan

1. The Japan-DPRK Relations

The Asahi Shinbun ("CHONGRYON ORDERED MONEY MOVES," 12/17/01) reported that Metropolitan Police Department sources stated that Chongryun ordered the Chogin credit unions to send at least 2.5 billion yen to fake-name bank accounts. The finding strengthens speculation that the pro-DPRK association regularly collected funds from these credit unions to deal with its worsening financial situation mainly caused by the decline in donations since the early 1990s. At that time, Chongryun started exerting pressure on Chogin credit unions to provide funds.

The Mainichi Shinbun ("NORTH KOREA DROPS PROBE INTO 'KIDNAPPED' JAPANESE," Seoul, 12/17/01), the Yomiuri Shinbun (CANCELLATION OF PROBE INTO 'KIDNAPPED' JAPANESE," 12/18/01, 01) and the BBC World News ("NORTH KOREA RED CROSS SUSPENDS PROBE INTO JAPANESE 'MISSING PERSONS,'" 12/17/01) reported that the DPRK Red Cross suspended its investigation of the "missing" persons due to Japan's "unnecessary playing up of the issue and defamation of the DPRK." The Korean Central News Agency quoted the DPRK Red Cross as saying, "Japan is playing up the non- existent 'kidnap' issue because it wants to label the DPRK a terrorist state, while also trying to militarize their own nation." The DPRK Red Cross also stated, "Japan has become undisguised in its moves for overseas aggression, escalating the anti-DPRK smear campaign and speeding up militarization. The Korean people are following these moves with high vigilance."

2. Japan's Role in Afghan Reconstruction

The Asahi Shinbun ("MORE AID AFGHANS EYED," 12/17/01) reported that Japan's Foreign Ministry is trying to find sources for an additional 70 billion yen in Official Development Assistance (ODA) for the reconstruction of post-Taliban Afghanistan. Senior Vice Minister Seiken Sugiura said that the ministry needs "an additional 70 to 80 billion yen," to help rebuild Afghanistan and provide humanitarian support for refugees. Some government officials say the Foreign Ministry's estimates are too high. A Liberal Democratic Party executive stated, "It would be impossible to get an additional 70 billion yen." At a meeting Thursday on foreign affairs issues hosted by the LDP, Foreign Minister Makiko Tanaka called on members to approve an increase in the ODA budget for the next fiscal year.

The Asahi Shinbun ("OGATA: AN IMPORTANT TEST FOR JAPAN," 12/14/01) reported that Sadako Ogata, Japan's recently named special representative for Afghanistan, stated that Japan's role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan will serve as a test for the nation's diplomacy. A former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Ogata criticized the reduction of Japanese Official Development Aid, insisting, "the Japanese public should realize that Japan's national security will not be maintained unless it thinks about other nations. The same thing can be said for Japan's economy. A solid recognition of the international foundation on which Japan's very existence is based must be expressed in as many ways as possible and Afghanistan will be an excellent opportunity for that expression." Ogata added, "in that sense, Afghanistan will serve as a test for Japanese diplomacy. If things go wrong in Afghanistan, Japan will also be placed in danger."

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