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I. **United States**

1. **ROK on DPRK Armistice Withdrawal Threat**

The Washington Post (Joohee Cho and Doug Struck, "SEOUL PLAYS DOWN NORTH KOREA'S THREAT ON ARMISTICE," Seoul, 02/19/03) reported that the ROK shrugged off a threat by the DPRK today to abandon the armistice agreement that ended the 1950-53 Korean War. Officials in the ROK said the dispute over the DPRK's nuclear program is not as dangerous as some people in Washington believe. "I believe the danger of war on the Korean Peninsula is slight -- in fact, nonexistent," ROK President Kim Dae Jung told his cabinet this morning, according to a statement

from his office. Kim did not mention the armistice threat specifically, a spokesman said. In Washington, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said the DPRK's threat would "only serve to hurt, isolate and move North Korea backward." He advised being "judicious" about it, saying, "there is a lengthy history of bravado to some of their statements." The DPRK declared it would have "no option but to take a decisive step to abandon its commitment" to the armistice if the US imposed sanctions, such as a naval blockade, and continued what the statement called plans to build up forces for a preemptive attack on the DPRK.

2. US on DPRK Armistice Withdrawal Threat

BBC News ("US PLAYS DOWN NORTH KOREAN THREAT," 02/19/03)

The US has described North Korea's threat to abandon the Korean War armistice as "rather predictable". "What you've seen is a rather predictable series of escalatory statements from North Korea," said White House spokesman Ari Fleischer. He was speaking after the DPRK said it would no longer feel obliged to observe the armistice which halted the 1950-53 war in response to what it called US violations of the truce. A US State Department official said the DPRK was going about things the wrong way if it wanted direct talks with the US. "The US will not respond to threats, broken commitments or blackmail by North Korea," he said. "Any further escalation by North Korea of the situation on the peninsula will bring international condemnation and further self-isolation."

3. US-DPRK Diplomatic Relations

Reuters (Martin Nesirky and Arshad Mohammed, "NORTH KOREA AND US TRADE TOUGH TALK ON NUCLEAR CRISIS," Seoul/Washington, 02/19/03) and CNN News ("NORTH KOREA: US STANCE 'ILLOGICAL,'" Pyongyang, 02/19/03) reported that the DPRK said on Wednesday the US' rejection of bilateral talks to solve a deepening nuclear crisis was illogical and aimed to thwart the DPRK's efforts to improve its economy and communist system. War warnings and assertions the US was poised to attack the DPRK have been daily fare in Pyongyang's official media since the crisis flared up nearly five months ago. The DPRK threatened on Tuesday to pull out of the 1953 armistice that ended the Korean War if sanctions were imposed on it. The US dismissed that as "strident rhetoric" but the DPRK hit back with its own dig at the US. "The US is insisting on its strange assertion that it cannot respond to the DPRK-US talks as they mean a sort of reward for the DPRK despite the unanimous world public opinion that DPRK-US direct talks should take place to find a peaceful solution to the nuclear issue," the DPRK's KCNA news agency quoted the foreign ministry as saying in a statement. "This is an illogical far-fetched assertion," the ministry added. The Rodong Sinmun described ties with the US as "a dangerous state of confrontation with no gunfire".

4. DPRK Nuclear Development

Time Magazine (Anthony Spaeth, "IT IS A CRISIS: NORTH KOREA'S ATOMIC AMBITIONS ARE REAL. SO, TOO, IS THE PROSPECT OF A NUCLEAR ARMS RACE ACROSS ASIA," 02/17/04) carried a story that reported that Japan's Defense Agency's Chief of Military Intelligence, Fumio Ota, came to the conclusion in a briefing to parliamentarians last week: DPRK President Kim Jong Il wants nukes, not some new carrots from the West. For North Asia, that renders irrelevant the debate over who is a bigger threat to the world-Kim Jong Il or far-off Saddam Hussein. If the DPRK gets a nuclear armory, technologically advanced Japan and the ROK will also be tempted to build atom bombs. And Kim, with his boilersuits and bouffant hairdo, could succeed in dismantling the whole postwar security structure of the region and the attendant and prosperous economic ties that peace

has fostered. As the CIA's Tenet told the Senate Intelligence Committee last week: "The domino theory of the 21st century may well be nuclear."

The full story can be found here: <http://www.time.com/time/asia/covers/501030224/story.html>

5. Powell NE Asia Tour

The Associated Press ("POWELL EXPECTED TO VISIT JAPAN, CHINA, SOUTH KOREA," 02/19/03) reported that US Secretary of State Colin Powell is expected to travel to Japan, the PRC and the ROK this week for talks on the DPRK's suspected nuclear weapons program, US officials said on Wednesday. The trip, which has yet to be formally announced by the State Department, is also likely to cover the US push for a possible war against Iraq, which the PRC has resisted, arguing that UN weapons inspectors should have more time to search for Baghdad's suspected weapons of mass destruction programs. Powell is expected to make stops in Tokyo and Beijing on his way to Seoul, where he is expected to attend the Feb. 25 inauguration of ROK President-elect Roh Moo-hyun.

6. Japan on US Iraq Policy

The Japan Times ("JAPAN CALLS FOR NEW RESOLUTION," New York, 02/19/03) reported that Japan appeared to support the US policy on Iraq on Tuesday, telling the U.N. Security Council it is "desirable" to adopt a new resolution showing Iraq has not fully complied in dismantling its weapons of mass destruction. But Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said Wednesday in Tokyo that Japan expressed its support for a new resolution in order to promote a unified international stance on Iraq, not to give its support to a US -led attack. "There is a misunderstanding," Koizumi told reporters in an attempt to dismiss the view that Japan's call for a new resolution immediately means it will support possible military action against Iraq. The US and Britain are now preparing a new resolution that would back an attack. Speaking during a two-day open debate in the Security Council in which noncouncil member countries aired their position on Iraq, Japanese Ambassador Koichi Haraguchi cast doubt on the effectiveness of stepped-up inspections in Iraq, as proposed by France, Germany and other countries. "Even if the inspections were to be continued and strengthened, they will hardly lead to the elimination of its weapons of mass destruction unless Iraq fundamentally changes its attitude of cooperating only passively," he told the council.

7. US on PRC Anti-Terror Role

The Associated Press (Joe McDonald, "AMID TENSIONS OVER NORTH KOREA AND IRAQ, US ENVOY PRAISES CHINA'S ANTI-TERROR ROLE," Beijing, 02/19/03) reported that amid US-PRC diplomatic tensions over differences toward the DPRK and Iraq, a US envoy praised the PRC on Wednesday for its role in fighting terrorism. Ambassador J. Cofer Black, in Beijing to discuss joint anti-terror efforts, said the two sides talked about law enforcement, diplomatic action and cutting off terrorist financing. Black wouldn't give details, but said he and PRC officials agreed on a "commonality of interests" in combatting al-Qaida and other terror groups. "Our two nations are engaged very closely in the war on terrorism," Black, director of the State Department's anti-terrorism office, said at a news conference. Asked how he reconciled such amicable cooperation with US frustration at PRC reluctance to pressure North Korea to settle the standoff over its nuclear program, Black said his mission was anti-terrorism and that the talks hadn't included any other diplomatic issues. "We are very pleased with our cooperation. We think it has great potential," he said. The talks were the third in a series of high-level US-PRC anti-terrorism contacts that began after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in New York and Washington.

8. ROK on US DPRK Military Action

The Associated Press (Sang-Huh Choe, "SOUTH KOREAN PRESIDENT-ELECT SAYS HE OPPOSES MILITARY OPTION AGAINST NORTH KOREA," Seoul, 02/19/03) reported that ROK president-elect said Wednesday he would oppose any consideration of US military action to force the DPRK to halt its suspected nuclear weapons development. US President George W. Bush has said he prefers a diplomatic solution to the standoff over the DPRK's nuclear activities, but has also maintained that "all options are on the table." Roh Moo-hyun, who takes office on Feb. 25, told members of the Korean Chamber of Commerce that he was "willing to differ with the United States," his country's No. 1 ally, "if that helps prevent war." "An attack on North Korea could trigger a war engulfing the entire Korean Peninsula," Roh said. "It's a serious issue, and at this moment I am against even consideration of such an option." The ROPK would likely suffer devastation in any war with the DPRK because Seoul lies within artillery range of guns on the border. At the same time, many ROK citizens don't view that the DPRK as a serious military threat and believe the US is exacerbating tensions more than the DPRK. ROK Defense Minister Lee Jun told the National Assembly on Wednesday that the DPRK's 1.1 million-member army was busy with annual winter training, "increasing its readiness."

9. ROK Subway Arson Attack

The Washington Post (Joohee Cho and Doug Struck, "SUBWAY INFERNO IN SOUTH KOREA KILLS AT LEAST 120 MAN WITH HISTORY OF ILLNESS SETS FIRE; MANY TRAPPED AFTER DOORS JAM," Seoul, 02/19/03) reported that a man with a history of depression and angry threats lit a flammable liquid inside a subway car in the city of Taegu, police reported, creating an inferno that engulfed two trains and killed at least 120 people. As the recovery of bodies continued, officials predicted the death toll would rise to about 140. People seeking loved ones crowded around hospitals and the burned-out station in Taegu, a textile center and the ROK's third-largest city, located about 200 miles southeast of Seoul. The blaze erupted at 9:55 a.m. when a man police identified as Kim Dae Han, 56, took out two gray plastic containers from a black bag and began flicking a cigarette lighter, according to witnesses. One passenger said he asked Kim what he was doing, but got no reply, according to the Chosun Ilbo newspaper. Another passenger, Park Keum Tae, 37, stated that Kim's clothing "caught fire from the lighter and he fell on the floor, screaming." Other passengers moved toward him, but Kim suddenly threw the two containers, Park said. In them was a liquid that caught fire, sending toxic clouds of black smoke through the six-car train as it arrived at the station. Kim's 27-year-old son told a reporter at the police station that his father "had been suffering from severe depression and he did not have normal evaluating skills," according to the Chosun Ilbo. "He often had problems comprehending what he heard. He blamed the doctors because he did not recover from cerebral apoplexy. When he saw subway accidents on TV news, he often said, 'I want to die jumping off the subway.'" Kim's son said his father had shown up at hospitals and police stations four times in the past two months demanding that someone kill him. Early this year, he bought two large plastic gasoline containers, said the son, who was not further identified. When the family asked him why he had bought them, he replied, "I will kill the doctors who failed to cure my illnesses," according to the newspaper. Authorities who questioned Kim today did not say if he had offered a motive.

10. DPRK Humanitarian Crisis

The Associated Press (Margaret Wong, "AID WORKER SAYS NORTH KOREA FACES FAMINE AS FOREIGN AID PLUNGES," Hong Kong, 02/19/03) reported that the DPRK could soon face another deadly famine unless foreign donors resume food supplies cut off because of the current nuclear

standoff, a leading aid official said Wednesday. "The people are living on the edge. It doesn't need much until we could slip back into the hunger of 1995-1997," Kathi Zellweger of the charity Caritas Hong Kong said upon her return from the isolated country. Zellweger, one of the few foreigners allowed to visit the DPRK regularly, said the country began to suffer huge cutbacks in foreign aid when US officials confronted the DPRK over its alleged nuclear program. "The political tensions now of course are making donors think more carefully," she said. "We have to continue as we are helping people in need, and we do not like to mix humanitarian aid and politics." The United Nations says donors have only provided 6.7 percent of the US\$225 million in supplies the DPRK sought so far this year. Its World Food Program, the DPRK's biggest food supplier, has been forced to cut its rations to some 3 million people, including children, pregnant women and the elderly, and close down subsidized factories that produce biscuits. "I do believe if no aid is forthcoming in the next few months, we will have severe crisis again in early summer," Zellweger warned.

11. PRC-WTO Status

The Associated Press ("US TRADE REPRESENTATIVE: CHINA HAS MADE 'GOOD PROGRESS' A YEAR AFTER ENTERING WTO," Hong Kong, 02/19/03) reported that the PRC has made "good progress" in complying with World Trade Organization standards in the year since joining the trade group - but it could still do more, US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick said Wednesday. Following a three-day trip to the mainland, Zoellick told reporters in Hong Kong that he was pleased to see that the PRC had lowered tariffs and issued licenses to foreign financial institutions, including insurance companies. He praised the PRC for revising its laws significantly and making them more transparent. But the top US trade official said he was disappointed that PRC authorities ordered more testing on genetically-modified US soybeans before certifying them safe for import on a permanent basis, instead of an interim one. The current interim licensing agreement expires in September. The PRC's capitalization requirements for foreign financial institutions also "looked a little high," he added. But Zoellick said he still came away from his trip with "a sense of extraordinary opportunity." The PRC became a member of the WTO on Dec. 11, 2001.

12. PRC DPRK Asylum Seekers

The Japan Times ("THIRD-COUNTRY PLAN EYED IN ASYLUM PROBE," 02/19/03) reported that Japan will consult with PRC authorities in an effort to allow four asylum seekers from the DPRK who entered a Japanese school in Beijing to be moved to a third country, government sources said Wednesday. The government also launched consultations with the ROK, which may accept the four, who entered the school grounds Tuesday afternoon when the gates were open to let students leave. It may still take a while until the actual deportation takes place, a Foreign Ministry official said, citing prior cases that took weeks or even months to resolve. Meanwhile, a PRC Foreign Ministry spokeswoman said the PRC will decide what to do with the asylum seekers after verifying their identities. "After China has received detailed information from Japan, it will check the identities of the four people and deal with them according to domestic and international laws and in a humanitarian spirit," Zhang Qiyue said in a written statement. On Tuesday, Chu Mi Yong, 43; her daughter, Roh Yu Mi, 13; son, Roh Gwang Myoung, 10; and Kim Chol, 20, entered the school in a bid to seek asylum in Japan, according to Rescue The North Korean People (RENK), a group supporting North Korean asylum seekers.

II. Japan

1. US Bases in Japan

The Japan Times ("GOVERNORS CALL FOR REVISION TO SOFA," 02/13/03) reported that Japanese governors of prefectures hosting US military bases urged the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) on Wednesday to revise the Japan-US Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). Forming a liaison group of 14 governors, they made the call during a meeting at LDP headquarters with an intra-party group aiming to secure a true Japan-US partnership through a revised agreement. Okinawa Gov. Keiichi Inamine told the meeting he cannot accept that under the current agreement, the US military is not required to hand over suspects to Japanese authorities before being indicted for a crime. Kanagawa Gov. Hiroshi Okazaki, commenting on the national government's plan to work on improving implementation of SOFA instead of revising it, said the US will still have the discretion to determine action. Aomori Gov. Morio Kimura urged creation of a consultative body between local governments and the US military, which shares a fighter base in Aomori with the Air Self-Defense Force. The participants said the LDP panel is expected to draft revisions to the pact.

Kyodo ("MARINE IN RAPE CASE PLANS TO SUE U.S. OVER TRANSFER TO JAPANESE AUTHORITIES," Naha, 02/14/03) reported that a US Marine on trial in Japan for attempted rape will sue the US federal government for handing him over to Japan and thereby subjecting him to the Japanese criminal justice system, a US lawyer representing him said Thursday. Maj. Michael Brown, 39, has decided to file a suit at a US federal district court in Texas, New York-based attorney Michael Griffith told reporters in Okinawa. Japanese public prosecutors indicted Brown on Dec. 19 on a charge of attempting to rape a Filipino woman in his car in Okinawa on Nov. 2. Brown, who was stationed at Camp Courtney in Okinawa, says he did not try to rape the woman. According to Griffith, Brown believes it is illegal for the US government to hand him, a US serviceman, over to Japan knowing that he could be exposed to a criminal justice system accused of human rights violations such as using police jails to detain suspects instead of detention houses. Brown is also considering naming the Japanese government in the suit, according to Griffith.

2. SDF-Police Joint Drill

The Japan Times ("GSDF, POLICE TRAIN FOR TERRORIST RAID," Osaka, 02/13/03) reported that the Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) and Osaka Prefectural Police conducted a joint security drill Wednesday simulating an attack by armed commandos. The drill, a strategy scenario involving 80 senior police and GSDF officers, was aimed at enhancing countermeasures for dealing with large-scale terrorist activities in the wake of the terrorist attacks in the US in 2001 and occasional North Korean spy ship intrusions, officials said. The scenario included agents armed with rocket launchers landing in Osaka Prefecture. During the simulation, the two groups tracked and neutralized the intruders, patrolled key installations and evacuated civilians. It is the third time the SDF and police conducted such a joint exercise, following one involving the GSDF and Hokkaido Prefectural Police in November and another with the GSDF and Fukui Prefectural Police earlier this month.

3. Japan on War against Iraq

The Japan Times ("FUKUDA LAMENTS DIFFERENCES OF OPINION OVER IRAQ," 02/13/03) reported that Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda expressed concern Wednesday that the rift between the US and European countries skeptical of the US case against Iraq is sending "the wrong message" to Iraq. Fukuda was referring to a joint statement issued on Feb. 10 by France, Russia and Germany that called for extending the weapons inspection process, as well as a rejection by Germany, France and Belgium of US calls at a NATO meeting to boost Turkish defenses in anticipation of a military offensive against Iraq. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi

remained noncommittal on Japanese support of a joint call by France, Russia and Germany, saying only that Japan will wait to see the result of the inspectors' report to the UN Security Council. In a one-on-one debate at a meeting of both houses of the Diet, Naoto Kan, leader of the Democratic Party of Japan, pressed Koizumi on whether he sides with the three European nations or the US. "It is not a question that I can answer," Koizumi said, adding that he will make his stance clear after Feb 14. Kan criticized Koizumi for "having no opinion" while leaders of other countries, including the PRC, have clearly expressed their stance. "If you are on the side of the US, why don't you say so clearly?" he asked.

4. Japanese Logistic Support for US

Kyodo ("JAPAN TO EXPAND REFUELING OPERATIONS IN ARABIAN SEA," Washington, 02/14/03) and the Asahi Shimbun ("MSDF SHIPS TO EXPAND FUELING TO OTHER NAVIES," 02/14/03) reported that the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) ships providing fuel to the US and British ships in the Indian Ocean will expand its refueling operations in the Arabian Sea in early March to include naval vessels from eight more countries, Japanese sources said Wednesday. The countries -- Canada, Germany, Greece, France, Italy, New Zealand, the Netherlands and Spain -- are among members of the US-led coalition engaged in the antiterrorism campaign, the sources said. Under the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law enacted in October 2001, the MSDF is currently refueling US and British warships engaged in operations in the Arabian Sea to hunt down al-Qaeda and Taliban members fleeing Afghanistan. With the growing possibility of a war with Iraq, the US and Britain are building up their naval strength in the Persian Gulf while leaving antiterrorism maritime patrols in the Arabian Sea to other coalition members. The Japanese government will exchange documents with the eight countries stipulating that oil provided by Japan should not be used for an attack on Iraq, the sources said. Japan also plans to exclude the northern part of the Persian Gulf from areas available for its refueling operations to prevent Japanese ships from being involved in fighting in the event of an attack on Iraq, they 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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