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I. United States

1. Japan Nuclear History

The Associated Press (Kenji Hall, "JAPAN STUDIED, BUT REJECTED, NUCLEAR ARMS," Tokyo, 2/20/03) and the Japan Times ("DEFENSE AGENCY CONCLUDED IN '95 THAT NUCLEAR ARMS AREN'T WORTH IT," 2/20/03) reported that Japan considered developing its own nuclear arsenal in 1995 to counter the threat of a nuclear-armed DPRK, but rejected the idea because it might deprive Japan of US military protection and alarm Asian countries. In a 31-page study, the Defense Agency concluded that the political and financial costs of having nuclear weapons were too high and consequences for the Asian region too weighty, agency spokesman Manabu Shimamoto said Thursday. It was the second time since the end of World War II that Japan had looked into the possibility of starting its own research on nuclear weapons. Japan rejected a similar plan in a 1967-1970 study, he said. As the only country ever attacked with nuclear weapons, Japan has vowed never to possess its own nuclear bombs. But the report showed that government officials haven't entirely ruled out the possibility. Running its own nuclear program would have forced Japan to start from scratch, building new facilities and buying equipment - a step that would have led to exorbitant defense spending, he said. But Japan's biggest concern was upsetting the balance of power in Asia. Japan scrapped the plan over worries that it would violate the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, undermine the US military's presence in Japan and cause a backlash from Asian nations, the spokesman said. Also, the US would likely never allow the DPRK to build a nuclear bomb, the study

concluded, he said. Shimamoto said the report, which was detailed in the national Asahi newspaper Thursday, was an internal document and was never intended for public release.

2. DPRK ROK Air Space Intrusion

The Associated Press (Sang-Huh Choe, "NORTH KOREAN JET BRIEFLY ENTERS SOUTH KOREA," Seoul, 2/20/03) reported that a DPRK fighter jet briefly crossed the western sea border with the ROK on Thursday but retreated without incident when two ROK jets raced to the area, the ROK Defense Ministry said. The provocation, which also prompted the ROK to put an anti-aircraft missile unit on battle alert. The incursion, the first by a DPRK military jet since 1983. The ROK Defense Ministry said the air incursion ended in just two minutes when the intruding MiG-19 was chased back across the maritime border by the ROK's F-5E fighters. The crisis has seen other infringements along the borders. In six separate incidents in December, troops from the DPRK briefly brought machine guns into the buffer zone between the two Koreas, where only rifles and small arms are allowed under the 1953 armistice. "Our military sternly protests the DPRK provocation and demands that the North take actions to prevent a recurrence of similar incidents," defense ministry spokesman Brig. Gen. Hwang Young-soo said in a statement after the jet incursion. ROK jets were 19 miles, or a two-minute flight, from the enemy jet when it began retreating, said air force Col. Oh Sung-dae.

Reuters (SOUTH KOREA TO ISSUE STRONG PROTEST OVER NORTH JET," Seoul, 2/20/03)

South Korea said Thursday it would protest strongly to the DPRK after one of the DPRK's fighter aircraft briefly crossed a maritime border into the South. The South Korean Defense Ministry said the DPRK MiG-19 fighter was in the South's airspace for just two minutes and was chased back North by South Korean F-5E fighters. "We will strongly protest against the intrusion after analyzing their intention," a statement from the ministry's Joint Chiefs of Staff said.

3. PRC on DPRK Diplomacy

The Associated Press (Audra Ang, "CHINA REITERATES: DIALOGUE BEST APPROACH TO NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR ISSUE," Beijing, 2/20/03) reported that the PRC on Thursday reiterated the need for dialogue on the DPRK nuclear issue, saying all sides agree that talks are the best way to resolve the crisis. "Dialogue is what we all wish for," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue said at a regular briefing. "That is the basic point of agreement." On Tuesday, the DPRK's foreign minister stopped in Beijing for a brief visit en route to a meeting of nonaligned nations in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Paek Nam Sun met with the PRC's vice foreign minister, Wang Yi, and both sides expressed hope that the nuclear standoff could be resolved peacefully.

4. US Japan Terrorist Warning

The Associated Press ("US OFFICIAL WARNS TOKYO OF RISKS OF POTENTIAL TERRORIST ATTACKS IN JAPAN," Tokyo, 2/20/03) reported that a US counterterrorism official on Thursday warned that Japan should not think it was free from the risk of a terrorist attack on its own shores, a Japanese Foreign Ministry official said. Visiting US State Department Coordinator for Counterterrorism Cofer Black did not provide details of any specific terrorist threat during his meeting with Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi, said Hideaki Mizukoshi. But both officials acknowledged the possibility that Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, if they exist, could be handed over to terrorists and described it as an "extremely grave" long-term concern, Mizukoshi said. Iraq has been under international pressure to clear doubts about its alleged weapons of mass destruction to avert a possible US-led war. On Thursday, Kawaguchi told Black that Tokyo would

work with Washington on counter-proliferation efforts, the official said. He would not provide details. Japan has been primarily concerned with North Korea's suspected nuclear weapons program. The communist country has proved it has the capability of firing a missile that could reach Japanese shores and has recently alarmed neighbors by withdrawing from the global nuclear arms control treaty. Japan and the United States also agreed to further strengthen counterterrorism efforts in cooperation with other Asian nations.

5. ROK Public Response to Subway Attack

BBC News ("ANGER MOUNTS OVER KOREAN FIRE," 2/20/03) reported that ROK President-elect Roh Moo-hyun has been confronted by angry relatives of those who died in the subway arson attack in Daegu on Tuesday. Roh, who takes over as the ROK's leader next week, shed tears as he visited a makeshift altar near the site of the blaze, and paid a silent tribute to the 125 people who are so far known to have died. But when he tried to leave the area, several mourners are said to have blocked his path, angry at the government's efforts to handle the disaster. Roh promised to hold an inquiry to "thoroughly investigate the cause of the accident and why the damage has been huge". Police say a mentally-disturbed man has already admitted starting the fire - by lighting a flammable liquid inside an underground train, which ignited and spread to a second train. Roh said he would set up a special disaster control agency as a result of the tragedy. "What is most important is to prevent such an accident from happening again," he said. Many relatives have expressed frustration at the amount of time needed to identify the victims. "Where am I supposed to find my child?" one woman asked Roh. "I have no body - please find it for me," another pleaded. Only 45 victims have so far been identified, with 388 people still unaccounted for. While officials say the number of missing has been inflated by clerical glitches, the death toll is almost certain to rise from the current figure of 125. Forensic scientists say they will need DNA testing to identify many of the bodies, which were burned beyond recognition. Anger is also being directed at the railway's staff and safety measures. Questions are also being asked about the materials used on the trains, some of which are said to have emitted toxic fumes. Other critics blame the automatic locking system on the train doors, which prevented people leaving their carriages.

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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