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CONTENTS

I. [United States](#)

1. [DPRK Nuclear Inspections](#)
2. [Inter-Korean Relations](#)
3. [DPRK Military Commander Death](#)
4. [Russia Nuclear Proliferation](#)
5. [Al-Qaida Nuclear Weapons Possession](#)
6. [US UN PRC Human Rights Resolution](#)
7. [Taiwan Election and Referendum](#)
8. [PRC Response to Taiwan Presidential Election](#)
9. [Taiwan Presidential Assassination](#)
10. [PRC Support for UN Ban on Proliferation](#)
11. [PRC Tianenmen Book](#)
12. [Germany-PRC Nuclear Plant Sale](#)
13. [ROK Bird Flu Outbreak](#)
14. [PRC Moon Rover Launch Plans](#)

I. **United States**

1. **DPRK Nuclear Inspections**

Reuters (Louis Charbonneau, "US, UN DISCUSS NEW NORTH KOREA NUCLEAR INSPECTIONS," Vienna, 03/20/04) reported that the United Nations and US are working closely together on a plan for the eventual return of nuclear inspectors to North Korea, the head of the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency said on Friday. Any new program would be more rigorous than previous UN inspections missions to the secretive Communist state, Mohamed ElBaradei told reporters. In a sign of renewed cooperation following tensions over the Iraq war, the DPRK nuclear program was among issues ElBaradei discussed with US President George W. Bush on Wednesday, the IAEA chief said as he flew back from Washington to the UN body's Vienna headquarters on Friday: "We are working

closely with the US on developing a plan on how to verify the program as and when the time comes." ElBaradei said this week that his inspectors should have unfettered access if ever they were to return to the DPRK. "We need to consult to see how we can come up with a plan that avoids the pitfalls of the past and makes sure that we have a comprehensive, verifiable action plan that ensures we will be able to have a complete survey of their nuclear program," ElBaradei said.

2. Inter-Korean Relations

Agence France-Presse ("NORTH KOREA PUSHES BACK INTER-KOREAN TALKS OVER US-SOUTH KOREA EXERCISE," Seoul, 03/22/04) reported that the DPRK has pushed back rapprochement talks with South Korea for the second time in a week, this time to protest US-ROK military drills that started on Monday, officials here said. The ROK and the DPRK were to hold talks for three days in Kaesong, mainly to discuss rebuilding cross-border railways. But the DPRK has abruptly put off the meeting, citing tensions allegedly caused by the joint military exercise, ROK officials said. "The talks cannot be held as South Korea is launching RSOI/FE exercises with the US," Pyongyang said in a message sent through a hotline to Seoul. Last week, the DPRK boycotted scheduled economic talks, citing political instability over the impeachment of ROK President Roh Moo-Hyun.

3. DPRK Military Commander Death

Yonhap ("N. KOREAN LEADER MOURNS DEATH OF MILITARY COMMANDER," Seoul, 03/22/04) reported that Nam Sang-rak, a DPRK three-star general in charge of air defense of Pyongyang, the capital, appears to have died. The DPRK's leader, Kim Jong-il, expressed his condolences over Nam's death, the DPRK's news agency, KCNA, monitored here, said Monday.

4. Russia Nuclear Proliferation

Pravda ("MOSCOW DISMISSES ALLEGATIONS THAT TERRORISTS BOUGHT NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN RUSSIA," Moscow, 03/22/04) reported that a spokesman for the Russian nuclear energy ministry, which is being transformed into the Federal Nuclear Energy Agency, has flatly dismissed a possibility that terrorists could buy nuclear weapons in Russia. "This is bluff, as it is simply impossible to purchase nuclear weapons, or even its component parts, in Russia," a former ministry official said in a RIA Novosti interview as he commented on the statement by Aiman al-Zawahri, an Al-Qaeda leader, to the effect that the organisation had acquired nuclear weapons. No cases of losing nuclear weapons or attempts to purchase such weapons have been registered in Russia, assured the source. Pakistani journalist Hamid Mir had told in an interview with the Australian Broadcasting Corp channel about his meeting with Al-Zawahri, who is the right hand man of international terrorist Osama bin Laden. Al-Zawahri said several dozen million dollars gave access to "smart," compact nuclear bombs on the black market of Central Asia and Russia. He claimed Al-Qaeda had purchased several bombs through scientists from the former USSR.

5. Al-Qaida Nuclear Weapons Possession

Associated Press ("AL-QAIDA'S NO. 2 CLAIMS TO HAVE NUKES," Sydney, 03/22/04) reported that Osama bin Laden's terror network claims to have bought ready-made nuclear weapons on the black market in central Asia, the biographer of al-Qaida's No. 2 leader was quoted as telling an Australian television station. In an interview scheduled to be televised on Monday, Pakistani journalist Hamid Mir said Ayman al-Zawahri claimed that "smart briefcase bombs" were available on the black market. It was not clear when the interview between Mir and al-Zawahri took place. US intelligence

agencies have long believed that al-Qaida attempted to acquire a nuclear device on the black market, but say there is no evidence it was successful. In the interview with Australian Broadcasting Corp. television, parts of which were released Sunday, Mir recalled telling al-Zawahri it was difficult to believe that al-Qaida had nuclear weapons when the terror network didn't have the equipment to maintain or use them. "Dr. Ayman al-Zawahri laughed and he said `Mr. Mir, if you have \$30 million, go to the black market in central Asia, contact any disgruntled Soviet scientist, and a lot of ... smart briefcase bombs are available,'" Mir said in the interview. "They have contacted us, we sent our people to Moscow, to Tashkent, to other central Asian states and they negotiated, and we purchased some suitcase bombs," Mir quoted al-Zawahri as saying.

6. US UN PRC Human Rights Resolution

Associated Press (Harry Dunphy, "US TO CRITICIZE CHINA'S HUMAN RIGHTS," Washington, 03/22/04) reported that reversing course from last year, the US will introduce a resolution criticizing China's human rights record at a 53-nation UN conference under way in Geneva, the State Department said Monday. Spokesman Richard Boucher repeated charges first made by the Bush administration last August that the PRC has been backsliding on promises it made on arrests, religious freedom and other human rights issues. He said the US has been disappointed by what he characterized as the PRC's failure to meet commitments it made at the US-China human rights dialogue in December 2002 as well as a failure to follow through on its stated intention to expand cooperation on human rights in 2003. "Our goal in sponsoring this resolution is to encourage China to take positive, concrete steps to meet its international obligations to protect fundamental freedoms of the PRC people," Boucher said.

7. Taiwan Election and Referendum

Agence France-Presse ("STRENGTHENED MANDATE FOR TAIWAN'S CHEN CAUSES JITTERS IN CHINA," Beijing, 03/22/04) reported that Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian's success in boosting his political mandate has raised fears in the PRC he will use it to make a decisive push for independence in his second and last four-year term. Beijing is particularly concerned that Chen will go ahead with a referendum in two years on a new constitution for the island, formalizing its separate identity from the mainland after half a century of informal independence. "Chen has got more support, and he may be more confident now in pursuing his road toward Taiwan independence," said Wu Nengyuan, head of Taiwan studies at China's Fujian Academy of Social Sciences. "Chen may run another referendum and may even change the constitution, which mainland China opposes. If he does so, it will be very dangerous," he said. Even though Chen won by a wafer-thin margin in Saturday's election, beating the opposition candidate by less than 30,000 votes, he actually strengthened his position compared to the presidential elections in 2000. Four years ago, he received just short of five million votes, or 39.3 percent of the total ballots cast, contrasting sharply with 6.5 million votes in Saturday's poll and an absolute majority of 50.1 percent. This has raised the risk of confrontation with the PRC, as the PRC may now reject as ineffective its recent indirect approach of influencing Taiwan by discreetly urging third countries such as the US to put pressure on the island, observers said. "Is there a chance of military confrontation in the next four years? Certainly," said Joseph Fewsmith, a China scholar at Boston University. "We need to have cautious and sober minds on all sides."

8. PRC Response to Taiwan Presidential Election

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA CONDEMNS FAILED TAIWAN REFERENDUM," 03/22/04) reported that the PRC condemned a failed Taiwanese referendum on plans to strengthen military defenses

against PRC missiles and push for peace talks as a "provocative attempt" to gain independence. "The referendum turned out to be invalid. Facts have proven that this illegal act goes against the will of the people," the officials said in a statement reported by the official Xinhua news agency. The comments by the PRC's Communist Party and Taiwan Affairs Office condemning the "provocative attempt to undermine cross-Straits relations and split the motherland" was the first response to voting which left Taiwan in uncertainty. On Saturday, incumbent President Chen Shui-bian was re-elected by a narrow margin but his opponents demanded the election be annulled amid suspicions over spoiled ballots and an apparent assassination attempt on Chen a day earlier. Victory for Chen, whose Democratic Progressive Party favors pushing for formal independence for Taiwan, was also soured by the invalidation of the referendum on relations with the PRC, which failed to attract sufficient voters. Xinhua acknowledged the results of the vote, noting that the outcome "causes disputes" and that the PRC was "closely watching developments."

Reuters ("CHINA SAYS NO STEPPED-UP MILITARY ALERT," Beijing, 03/22/04) reported that the PRC's Defense Ministry said Monday there has been no change to the People's Liberation Army's level of alert after Taiwan's presidential elections. "I have not heard of the military receiving any orders to change its level of alert," a ministry spokesman said, when asked if the alert had been heightened. He had no further comment on a report in Hong Kong's South China Morning Post that said China had ordered its army on combat alert and was ready to strike Taiwan if the island's election dispute intensifies.

9. Taiwan Presidential Assassination

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA NOT BEHIND SHOOTING, SAYS TAIWAN," 03/22/04) reported that Taiwan has ruled out the PRC having any involvement in the assassination attempt on President Chen Shui-bian as local media suggested a renegade fanatic was responsible. Police said they were gathering witness accounts, with one saying the suspect was a middle-aged man who wore a motorcycle helmet and a T-shirt supporting Chen, the China Times Express evening newspaper reported. After he fired his weapon, believed to have been a handgun, he fled on a motorcycle, the newspaper said. Police said they were screening video footage from the security cameras of nearby shops. Chen and Vice-President Annette Lu suffered minor injuries in the attack on Friday while they were being driven in a motorcade greeting supporters in the president's southern stronghold of Tainan city. The president, who recovered to cast his vote in Saturday's presidential election and referendum, was hospitalised and received 14 stitches Friday for the bullet wound to his abdomen. Taiwan earlier ruled out the PRC being behind the attack which happened on the final day of campaigning in an election focused on the island's fraught relations with the mainland. "I can be sure this incident has absolutely nothing to do with Communist China and politics, but is simply a social order incident," National Security Bureau chief Tsai Chao-ming told reporters. However, he declined to comment on who might have been responsible or what their motive may have been. Firearms are illegal in Taiwan but can be purchased on the black market. Two homemade bullets, measuring 8.10 millimetres (0.32 inches) by 10.09 mm, were found while two bullet shell casings were discovered on the road nearby. One bullet, which was made of lead, lodged in Chen's jacket and the other, made of copper, was found in the jeep in which he was traveling. Police said they believed the lead bullet hit Chen's stomach and the copper one grazed Lu's knee.

10. PRC Support for UN Ban on Proliferation

Bloomberg ("US WINS CHINA'S SUPPORT FOR UN BAN ON PROLIFERATION," 03/22/04) reported that the US won China's support for a United Nations resolution banning proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by dropping a call for interdiction of ships at sea suspected of carrying such arms,

the PRC's UN ambassador said. Ambassador Wang Guangya had threatened to use the PRC's veto in the Security Council to block any US draft resolution that included interdiction, arguing that stopping ships at sea violated international laws. UN consideration of increased interdiction was a concern to companies such as Orient Overseas International Ltd. -- the seventh-largest Asian shipping company, controlled by the family of Hong Kong Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa -- and other shippers tapping US-China trade. "That nasty word, interdiction, has been taken out," Wang said at the UN in New York. "Now there is just a reference to prevention. So this is now okay with the permanent members." The resolution is aimed at closing gaps in existing non-proliferation treaties, including the spread of nuclear weapons by nations such as Pakistan, a Security Council member whose top nuclear scientist, Abdul Qadeer Khan, admitted transferring technology to North Korea, Iran and Libya. Acceptance by the permanent members means the resolution, first proposed by US President George W. Bush in a speech to the UN General Assembly in September, will be given to the 10 elected Security Council members as early as today and may be adopted by the end of March, British UN Ambassador Emyr Jones Parry said. A draft of the resolution circulated in December said nations must establish "domestic controls" to prevent proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and pass laws prohibiting any "non-state actor" from getting them. It calls on nations to account for materials used to make illegal arms, secure borders against their transport and assist countries that request help doing so.

11. PRC Tianenmen Book

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA BLOCKS FORMER LEADER LI PENG FROM PUBLISHING TIANANMEN BOOK: REPORT," 03/22/04) reported that the PRC's Communist Party has blocked former premier Li Peng from publishing a memoir aimed at cleansing his legacy as the perpetrator behind the 1989 Tiananmen massacre, according to a Hong Kong news magazine. Li's nearly 300,000-word manuscript, titled "The Key Moment," details how important decisions and assessments at the time were not made by him as widely believed, the Yazhou Zhoukan said. The former premier sought to explain how leaders in the central government were divided over what to do about the weeks-long pro-democracy protests in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, the magazine said in its March 28 issue. Li, 76, finished the memoir last autumn and sent the manuscript together with dozens of photos to the Communist Party's top organ, the Politburo, seeking permission to publish it, Yazhou Zhoukan reported. But Li was told it was inappropriate to publish the book for the time being, despite Li expressing willingness to revise its contents. The weekly cited sources who have read the manuscript and are close to current Premier Wen Jiabao and Li's successor, parliamentary chairman Wu Bangguo. Li's manuscript highlighted an incident on April 22, 1989 when students gathered at Tiananmen Square, demanding a chance to deliver a petition to Li, the then-premier, in person, but Li failed to meet with them. Li's memoir argued that contrary to public belief, he was unaware the students were told he would meet them and did not mean to ignore them, a move which made the students felt lied to and caused the rift between students and the government to widen. The report could not be confirmed Saturday, but other reports, including the Writer Digest, had said Li, who retired last year from his position as head of the national parliament, was writing his memoirs

12. Germany-PRC Nuclear Plant Sale

Reuters ("BERLIN TO DROP SALE OF NUKE PLANT TO CHINA," reported that the German government is likely to drop its controversial plan to sell a mothballed nuclear plant to the PRC, sources close to the government said Monday. Plans to allow the sale had been fiercely criticized by Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's Green coalition partners and some of his own Social Democrats. Critics said the plant, designed to reprocess plutonium to make so-called mixed-oxide, or MOX fuel

rods for nuclear power stations, could be used to manufacture atomic weapons. They also said the export would smack of hypocrisy, since Berlin is committed to phasing out nuclear power on German soil. "We think it's over," said one source close to the government who declined to be named. "It's all being shelved with the aim that it should be forgotten." Other sources close to the government concurred with that view. The first source said Schroeder's Chancellery had realized that the coalition would not back the sale. The plant, built by industrial group Siemens AG in Hanau near Frankfurt, was mothballed in 1995 without ever going into service. It was due to be sold to the PRC in a deal estimated at 50 million euros (\$61.72 million).

13. ROK Bird Flu Outbreak

Reuters (Cho Mee-young, "SOUTH KOREA CONFIRMS NEW CASE OF BIRD FLU," Seoul, 03/22/04) reported that the ROK confirmed Monday its first case of bird flu for more than a month, dashing hopes it had seen the last of an epidemic that has ravaged poultry and killed 24 people across Asia. The outbreak, discovered at the weekend at a chicken farm in Kyonggi province, was the first new case since February 5 and 16,000 poultry at the affected farm were destroyed on Sunday, the agriculture ministry said. Agriculture Minister Huh Sang-man visited the area on Monday and urged thorough disinfection measures to contain the outbreak, the ministry said in a statement. "One farm located in the city of Yangju has tested positive for highly pathogenic avian influenza," it said. Yangju is about 25 miles north of the capital, Seoul. It said that a combined 400,000 chickens and ducks within a three-km (1.9-mile) radius of the affected farm would be destroyed and poultry farms within a radius of 30 km (19 miles) to 40 km (25 miles) would be checked twice a day by telephone for new outbreaks. Before the latest discovery, the ROK had destroyed nearly five million poultry and confirmed outbreaks at 19 farms across the country since early December. Certain strains of bird flu can be fatal to humans, although the ROK has had no human deaths.

14. PRC Moon Rover Launch Plans

Associated Press ("REPORT: CHINA TO LAUNCH MOON ROVER IN 2012," Beijing, 03/22/04) reported that the PRC plans to launch its first moon rover in 2012 as part of its ambitious space exploration program, state media reported. The vehicle's main purpose would be to provide information on where to set up a base on the moon, the Beijing Youth Daily newspaper said Sunday, citing Ouyang Ziyuan, lead scientist of the country's lunar probe program. The rover would carry a camera, a telescope and seismological gear to register quake activity on the moon, the report said. The rover is part of the three-phase lunar probe program, also called "Chang'e," after a fairy in PRC folklore who flies to the moon. The first phase is under way, with PRC scientists building a two-ton lunar probe that is to be launched by 2007 and orbit the moon for at least 12 months, state media has reported. It will take three-dimensional lunar images, measure the density of the moon's soil and explore its environment.

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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