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I. United States

1. DPRK-US-PRC Multilateral Talks

The New York Times (Joseph Kahn, "US ENVOYS ARRIVE IN CHINA FOR TALKS WITH NORTH KOREA," Beijing, 04/23/03) and the Associated Press (Christopher Bodeen, "US, NORTH KOREAN ENVOYS MEET IN BEIJING," Beijing, 04/23/03) reported that ending a six-month impasse in face-t--face contacts, US and DPRK negotiators met in Beijing on Wednesday for talks that Washington hopes will end what it says is the DPRK's program to build nuclear weapons. Expectations have been low for the talks, which also involve PRC officials, and there was no immediate word of any progress in the discussions, which are scheduled to run through Friday. Leader of the US delegation, Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly, wouldn't answer reporters' questions after a first day of talks, saying only, "No words today, thank you." A US Embassy spokeswoman, speaking on customary condition of anonymity, said the meeting began as scheduled. She said she had no details on what was discussed the first day or how long the meeting lasted. PRC officials have refused to say what role Beijing will play. The talks bring together the three governments for the first time since they negotiated the 1953 armistice that halted fighting in the Korean War. Foreign diplomats in

Beijing and PRC experts say they don't expect the talks to produce any immediate agreements. They say the sides will probably spend much of their time just staking out their basic positions. "I can't see anything firmer than an agreement to meet again," said one Western diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity. Wednesday's discussions took place at the Diaoyutai State Guest House on the west side of Beijing, a secluded complex of villas used to host foreign visitors. No journalists were allowed inside the complex. The DPRK was represented by Ri Gun, deputy director of American affairs for its Foreign Ministry, and the PRC by Fu Ying, director general of the Asian Affairs Department of its Foreign Ministry.

The Associated Press (Deb Riechmann, "NORTH KOREAN NEGOTIATORS KNOWN FOR DRAMA," Washington, 04/23/03) reported that US negotiators holding talks with the DPRKs this week have reason to be wary of that nation's flair for diplomatic drama. Decades ago, DPRK officials once sawed the legs of chairs at the bargaining table, so their US negotiating partners would look smaller. More recently, they tried shrinking their own team - one member a day - to unsettle the US. "They have an incredible ability to sort of wait you out, and they can be very stubborn," said Wendy Sherman, President Clinton's adviser on North Korea who has been at the negotiation table in Pyongyang more than once. "In that sense they're tough negotiators." The DPRK has historically have taken threats and brinkmanship tactics to the limit, said Scott Snyder, an expert on the nation's negotiating style. During talks in the 1950s, the DPRKs engaged in gamesmanship over protocol - fiddling over everything from the size of the flags placed on the table to the types of chairs used to seat negotiators. "The DPRKs came in and cut the legs of the chairs down so that they would be taller than their (American) counterparts," said Snyder, now an Asia specialist at the Asia Foundation in Seoul. But sometimes when negotiations appear deadlocked, the DPRK surprises the US, he said.

During one round of talks in the 1990s, the US were puzzled when the DPRK delegation started shrinking. "Every day, there would be one less person on the DPRK side," Snyder said. "The US side was beginning to wonder whether there would be anybody left to talk to." The DPRK's message was: "We really hate this," but in the end, they made an agreement. During talks in 1994, a DPRK negotiator repeatedly screamed at Robert Gallucci, the lead US negotiator, to stop using the phrase North-South dialogue. "Enough with this!" the DPRK exclaimed. "You really can't say something like that to someone who was born in Brooklyn," Gallucci said. He then rattled off the phrase a half dozen times merely to irritate his negotiating partner. The DPRK threatened to walk out, but there was one hitch - the meeting was taking place in their offices in Geneva. At the table this time for America is James Kelly, assistant secretary of state for East Asia. The DPRK delegation is led by deputy director Gen. Li Gun from the US affairs bureau of the foreign affairs ministry. "He's spent a lot of time interacting with Americans so in a way, he's going to be an easier person to communicate with," Snyder said. Still, his opening remarks probably will be harsh. "He has to demonstrate how effective he's defending the fatherland," Snyder said. Of course, the US can pull histrionics, too, when it suits them, or just play hard to reach. Charles Kartman, former US special envoy for Korean affairs, "could sit as long and just as solid-faced as the DPRKs," Sherman said. "Perhaps someone will walk out at some point - which happens in almost every negotiation," she said. "They'll walk out or we'll walk out. There'll be some drama, but it's all part of the dance."

2. Russia on Catastrophic DPRK Event

Agence France-Presse (""CATASTROPHIC" EVENTS IMMINENT REGARDING NORTH KOREA: RUSSIA," Moscow, 04/23/03) reported that a top Russian foreign ministry official was quoted as saying in Tokyo that a "catastrophic" development of events in the US-DPRK nuclear standoff was imminent. "It is probable that, as early as tomorrow, there will be a catastrophic development of events," ITAR-TASS quoted Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Losyukov as saying. He added that

the standoff had "reached an extreme stage" but did not give a more detailed explanation about his warning. Losyukov holds the Asian affairs brief in the ministry. His comments came as US Asia envoy James Kelly had a first round of low-key nuclear talks in Beijing with "axis of evil" foe North Korea. Losyukov said that Russia would welcome progress in Kelly's negotiations with Li Gun, the DPRK foreign ministry's deputy director for US affairs and a former senior member of his country's delegation to the United Nations. "If the danger is defused, we would only welcome this," Losyukov said. In Moscow, Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov also welcomed the talks and said Russia was ready to join in. "If at one step or another in these consultations, the parties deem Russia's participation necessary to reach an agreement, Russia is ready to do it," Ivanov said. "Russia has always said it is in favor of a political solution and dialogue is essential for that," he said after talks with his Algerian counterpart Abdelaziz Belkhadem. Russia was excluded from the talks in what observers here said may have been tied to its fierce opposition to the US-led war in Iraq.

3. DPRK Jet Fighter Counter-Surveillance

Agence France-Presse ("NORTH KOREAN FIGHTERS ON RARE SURVEILLANCE FLIGHTS OVER SEA OF JAPAN," Seoul, 04/23/03) reported that a squadron of DPRK jet fighters launched rare long-distance flights to counter US and Russian surveillance flights over the Sea of Japan, officials and reports said Wednesday. ROK Defense Minister Cho Young-Kil said the DPRK mobilized 10 fighter jets for long-duration flights Sunday and Monday, an unusual move because the country's energy crisis had sharply limited such flights in the past. A ministry spokesman quoted Cho as telling a National Assembly committee Tuesday: "Ten DPRK MiG-21s and MiG-23s launched long-distance navigation flight training Sunday and Monday." The JoongAng Daily, a major newspaper in Seoul, said the DPRK air force was training to counter US and Russian surveillance flights over the Sea of Japan (East Sea). An unidentified military official told JoongAng that DPRK fighters had flown hundreds of kilometers, staying in the air for up to 90 minutes.

4. Japan Middle East Visit

The Japan Times ("KOIZUMI MULLS US, MIDEAST TRIPS," 04/23/03) and Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN PM TO VISIT MIDDLE EAST TO DISCUSS REBUILDING IRAQ," Tokyo, 04/23/03) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi will visit Egypt, Saudi Arabia and other countries in June to discuss reconstruction of Iraq and the Middle East peace process. Koizumi will meet Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and other leaders to seek their understanding on his decision to support Washington in the Iraq war, the Sankei Shimbun newspaper said, without citing sources. The visit is also aimed at promoting Japan's presence in the reconstruction process of Iraq, it said. A spokesman for the prime minister, Yu Kameoka denied the report, however, saying nothing has been decided. Koizumi is widely expected to visit Britain, Spain, France, Germany and Greece from Saturday to discuss postwar reconstruction in Iraq and healing the rifts in the international community over the war, but the trip has yet to be officially announced.

5. Japan Red Army Radical Hijacker Return to Japan

The LA Times ("RADICAL'S SISTER RETURNS FROM NORTH KOREA, IS HELD," 04/23/03) reported that the sister of a Japan Red Army radical accused of hijacking a commercial airliner to the DPRK in 1970 returned to Tokyo and was immediately arrested on charges of visiting the DPRK without approval from the Japanese government. Michiko Akagi, 49, went to Pyongyang to stay with her brother, Shiro Akagi, in 1983. Shiro Akagi, 55, and other Red Army members accused of forcing a Japan Airlines plane to fly to DPRK have lived in that nation's capital since the hijacking.

6. PRC SARS Uprising

The New York Times (Erik Eckholm, "BEIJING CLOSES SCHOOLS AND POSTS ANOTHER SHARP RISE IN SARS," Beijing, 04/23/03) reported that the city of Beijing closed all its primary and secondary schools until May 7, 2003 at least, and said the 1.7 million affected students should study at home, using a newly improvised online educational service. Later in the day, officials posted yet another large increase in confirmed patients with severe acute respiratory syndrome in the city. As of Tuesday evening, the Ministry of Health reported, 693 cases had been confirmed in Beijing -- a jump of 105 from the number given just yesterday, reaching a total more than double that presented by officials at a news conference only four days ago, when they pledged to bring their reports in line with reality. Officials say the rising numbers largely reflect the transfer of patients from the suspected to the confirmed category, but they have not said how many new patients are actually developing SARS in the city each day, and whether the trend is still climbing sharply or starting to level off. The PRC overall had 2,305 confirmed cases of the dangerous new viral disease as of Tuesday evening, according to the announcement. Ninety-six people have died. Breaking with previous days, the ministry did not list the additional number of suspected SARS cases for the city or the country. The suspension of classes was the strongest action yet against the new disease by a city that only days ago admitted it had concealed a spreading epidemic and is now struggling to contain it, with public fears on the rise.

7. SARS WHO Travel Alerts

BBC News ("SARS TRAVEL ALERT EXTENDED," 04/23/03) reported that international travelers are being advised not to visit Toronto, Beijing and the PRC'ss Shanxi province because of the danger of SARS. The World Health Organization (WHO) has added the three destinations to Hong Kong and the PRC's Guangdong province as it tries to halt the spread of the deadly virus. The new warning came as it was announced that nine more people had died of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome in the PRC and six in Hong Kong. The official death toll worldwide now stands at 251. Presently, the known death toll: 106 Hong Kong: 105 Singapore: 16 Canada: 15 Vietnam: 5 Thailand: 2 Malaysia: 2. Dr David Heymann, WHO's communicable diseases chief, said the three new areas on its advice list had "quite a high magnitude of disease and a great risk of transmission locally - outside of the usual health workers." He said the areas had also been exporting cases to other countries. The travel warning will be active for at least three weeks - double the maximum incubation period for SARS, he said. Speaking in Rome, WHO Director General Gro Harlem Brundtland said the spread of SARS was "a challenge to everyone." She said SARS was "a new virus disease, a new type, more malignant" and that "every country has to be prepared." A spokesman for the Ontario provincial health ministry in Canada, John Letherby, described the WHO's inclusion of Toronto as "regrettable." "It's not something where we're seeing the effects of the magnitude of the equivalent of a China," he said. The WHO had praised the tough measures taken by Canada's business capital but has seen SARS continue to spread in the community there. "Toronto last week had an exportation which set up a cluster of five cases in health workers in another country," Dr Heymann said.

8. Hong Kong Financial Response to SARS

BBC News ("HONG KONG UNVEILS AID PACKAGE," 04/23/03) reported that Hong Kong's government has unveiled a huge package of financial aid to counter the impact of the deadly SARS virus, which is expected to sap economic growth this year. Chief executive Tung Chee-hwa announced measures worth HK$11.8bn ($1.5bn;£950m). The package includes tax rebates, lower rent for shops and reduced water and sewage charges for businesses. Hong Kong is struggling to contain the outbreak of SARS which has killed 105 people in the territory and infected more than

1,400. To support consumer spending, the government slashed rents for public housing by a quarter. The action from the government shows they understand the problems we are facing Joseph Tung, Travel Industry Council The aid deal offered a reprieve to workers in some of the most vulnerable sectors, such as tourism, catering and retailing, which have suffered as tourists, business travellers and domestic consumers have stayed at home. The government pledged to guarantee loans to firms in the worst-hit industries from a new fund worth HK$3.5bn. As a result, travel firms will be able to continue paying their staff, said Joseph Tung, executive director of the Travel Industry Council (TIC). 'Good gesture' "The action from the government shows they understand the problems we are facing," Tung stated. Wages typically make up between 30% and 40% of a travel agent's costs, but visitor bookings have slumped by more than 90% since the World Health Organisation (WHO) warned against travel to Hong Kong, he said. TIC licenses and represents all of Hong Kong's 1,350 travel agencies which employ about 25,000 staff. Tung said he was "confident that everything will be under control" at the end of the three month loan guarantee period, allowing tourism to recover "very strongly."

9. PRC Human Rights

The Associated Press (Lolita C. Baldor, "FAMILY BLASTS SCHOLAR'S JAILING IN CHINA," Washington, 04/23/03) reported that Yang Feng Shan, 92, is struggling to understand why his son, Jianli, has been held in a Beijing prison for a year. "I can't understand why he has to be in jail. It is like the sky collapsed," his daughter-in-law, Christina Fu says, interpreting his Shandong dialect. "What did he do wrong?" A PRC citizen with permanent US residency, Yang Jianli is founder of the Foundation for China in the 21st Century, a Boston-based group that advocates democracy and the rule of law in the PRC. He was detained April 26, 2002, during his first trip to his homeland in 13 years, while trying to board a flight in the southwestern city of Kunming using a fake identity card. An anonymous caller phoned Fu to say her husband had been detained. Yang called her a day later to say police were guarding him in a hotel. She never heard from him again. Fu knows her husband is being held because he entered the PRC illegally. But as she talks about the past year and its effect on her children, she pushes tears from her eyes and struggles to keep her voice steady. Her husband, a Brookline, Mass., scholar, hadn't been to China in 13 years, and longed to return. "I could feel how hard it was for him," says Fu. "I knew it would make him feel better. He said he had a plan." State Department officials have been told Yang is being treated well and is in a Beijing jail. No charges have been filed, and no one has been allowed to see or talk to him. The PRC government's only response was a letter saying Yang "had violated China's law and become a subject of an investigation."

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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