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CONTENTS

I. [United States](#)

1. [Al-Qaida Nuclear Weapons](#)
2. [PRC-DPRK Relations](#)
3. [PRC-US Relations](#)
4. [PRC-EU DPRK Six-Way Talks?](#)
5. [ROK-Japan on DPRK Nuclear Talks](#)
6. [DPRK-US University IT Exchange](#)
7. [Russia Energy Security](#)
8. [PRC Economic Development](#)
9. [US-Japan Missile Destroyer](#)
10. [ROK Domestic Politics](#)
11. [Taiwan Presidential Election Recounts](#)

I. **United States**

1. Al-Qaida Nuclear Weapons

The Associated Press ("AL-QAIDA MAY HAVE NUCLEAR WEAPONS," Sydney, 03/23/04) 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 `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.

2. PRC-DPRK Relations

Agence France-Presse ("PRC FM ARRIVES IN NORTH KOREA," 03/23/04) reported that a PRC delegation led by Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing was received by DPRK Vice Foreign Minister Kim Yong-Il and other ranking officials on arrival at a Pyongyang airport, the agency said. "National flags of the DPRK and the PRC were fluttering on the flagpoles on the airport," it said in a dispatch monitored here. Li's visit, which marks the first by a PRC foreign minister to North Korea in five years, followed six-nation talks held in Beijing last month on ending the standoff over Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions.

3. PRC-US Relations

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA SUSPENDS US DIALOGUE OVER MOVE TO CONDEMN HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD," 03/23/04) reported that the PRC has suspended its human rights dialogue with the US and angrily dismissed a move by the US to table a resolution at a key UN meeting condemning its human rights record. The PRC foreign ministry also summoned US ambassador to the PRC Clark T. Randt in protest, saying the resolution was a disgrace and a serious interference in its internal affairs. "The US decision to raise an anti-China resolution at the 60th United Nation's Human Rights Meeting is serious interference in China's internal affairs," foreign ministry spokesman Kong Quan said in a statement. "The PRC government and people express their strong dissatisfaction and staunch opposition to this." The US announced Monday it would seek a resolution condemning the PRC for alleged human rights abuses and accused Beijing of not living up to its international commitments to protect the rights of its citizens.

4. PRC-EU DPRK Six-Way Talks?

Tokyo Foresight ("'SOURCE' SAYS PRC TRYING TO BRING EU INTO SIX-WAY TALKS ON DPRK ISSUES," 03/20/04) reported that the six-party talks on the issue of the DPRK's nuclear weapons development program may turn into seven-way talks. According to a PRC diplomatic source, French President Jacques Chirac told CPC General Secretary Hu Jintao, who visited France in late January, that "the EU (European Union) is willing to continue contributing (to resolving the issue) as a member of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization's (KEDO) Board of Directors." Hu reportedly replied, "By all means, we would like to exert every effort, while watching the situation closely." The EU had expressed its desire to participate in the first round of the six-way talks held in August last year. At the time, however, the US and France were in deep conflict, and the PRC, which had no confidence on the prospects of the talks, was unable to persuade the US, which asserted that "having more participants would prolong the coordination."

5. ROK-Japan on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Reuters ("S. KOREA, JAPAN AIM FOR EARLY NORTH NUCLEAR TALKS," Seoul, 03/23/04) reported that the chief ROK and Japanese delegates to the six-party DPRK nuclear talks vowed Tuesday to try to open working level talks on disarmament as soon as possible. But ROK Deputy Foreign Minister Lee Soo-hyuck told reporters before talks in Seoul with Japanese counterpart Motoji Yabunaka that

the trick would be getting the DPRK to agree to launch talks approved last month by the six countries. "We are holding discussions with the aim of holding the first working group meeting at the earliest possible date," Lee said. "But as for setting a date, it appears that decision is in North Korea's hands," he said. Lee said the ROK was hoping for results from the visit to the DPRK by PRC Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing, who left Tuesday for a rare trip to Pyongyang to try to speed up consultations on the DPRK's nuclear programs.

6. DPRK-US University IT Exchange

Yonhap ("SIX NORTH KOREANS VISIT US UNIVERSITY," Seoul, 03/23/04) reported that six technicians from one of the DPRK's most prestigious academic institutions are visiting an American university for discussions on expanding information technology cooperation despite the international row over the North's nuclear arms program, a Japanese journalist said Tuesday. Fumio Matsuo, former chief of Kyodo News Service's Washington Bureau, told Yonhap News Agency that Jong Kwang-chon, a vice president of Kim Chaek University of Technology, and five other IT experts arrived at Syracuse University in New York last Tuesday, the fourth such visit by North Koreans technicians since 2002. They are scheduled to stay in the US until March 25, said Matsuo. IT cooperation began in June 2001. Last year, the two sides discussed such issues as digital libraries, machine translation and decision support, all part of the first partnership project of its kind by researchers from DPRK and US institutions, according to Matsuo.

7. Russia Energy Security

New York Times (James Brooke ("LET A HUNDRED RUSSIAN KILOWATTS BLOOM," Khabarovsk, 03/23/04) reported that as power blackouts threaten the PRC's industrial growth, the PRC is increasingly looking north, much the way US power company executives first looked to Canada for power in the 1960's. Only 3 percent of hydroelectric power potential has been tapped in border areas of the Russian Far East, a mountainous region with a population density on a par with that of Maine. With new Russian laws allowing foreign investment in electricity generation, envoys from Khabarovsk, home to the regional power company, have traveled to Beijing recently, pitching proposals for Chinese financing of dams. "In China, many powerful industries are going to lobby this year for importing electricity from Russia," predicted Minakov, director general of Vostok-Energo, the far eastern export arm of Russia's electricity monopoly, the Unified Energy System. "Thirty percent of the factories we saw were stopped because they lack electricity," he said of a tour he took in January through a PRC border province. "They say they need one to two billion kilowatt hours annually - and they are ready to buy it now." PRC planners had forecast 5 percent annual growth in electricity use last year, but the actual increase was 15 percent. Northeast PRC is expected to exhaust its existing power generation capacity by 2010. Regarding electricity exports from Russia, Dr. Peter Hayes of the Nautilus Institute asserted that "Prices, reliability of supply and technical standards all need to be sorted out... These systems require real-time control centers," said Dr. Peter Hayes of the Nautilus Institute. Daojiong Zha, director of Center for International Energy Security at Renmin University in Beijing, said, "The potential is good, this is clearly something that should be promoted, but we need someone to point the way out."

8. PRC Economic Development

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA SAYS NEARLY 60 MILLION PEOPLE LIVING IN ABJECT POVERTY," 03/23/04) reported that the PRC says it has nearly 60 million people living in abject poverty, twice the figure usually cited in government statements. In the year 2003, 56.17 million PRC were living

on 869 yuan (105 dollars) or less a year, according to Liu Jian, director general of the Cabinet's Leading Group Office of Poverty Reduction. "We call those people low-income earners with unstable access to food and clothing," he told reporters at a briefing in Beijing organized by the World Bank. This is almost twice the 29 million poor people the PRC government normally refers to, based on an even lower standard of annual expenditure of no more than 637 yuan per person. Even the higher official figure makes the PRC seem significantly better off than suggested in most international surveys. The World Bank, whose poverty standard is "a dollar a day" for each person, believes the PRC has about 200 million poor people. Li said the situation for the poor in the PRC is not directly comparable to that in other countries. "Poor farmers in China all have a piece of contracted land and they don't have to pay any lease on their land," he said. "Secondly, they all have housing of their own, and therefore, they don't have to pay rent," he said.

9. US-Japan Missile Destroyer

Reuters ("US DESTROYER TO UP MISSILE DEFENCE OF JAPAN," 03/23/04) reported that the US Navy says it will deploy a guided missile destroyer in the Sea of Japan in September as part of a US effort to deploy an anti-missile shield to protect against attacks from countries like the DPRK by the end of 2004. Navy Secretary Gordon England said the destroyer - equipped to track potential enemy missiles - would remain in the Sea of Japan "on a virtually continuous basis" as "part of the President's directive to accelerate the fielding of a ballistic missile defence operational capability." Chris Taylor, spokesman for the Pentagon's Missile Defence Agency (MDA), said a total of seven Navy destroyers - including the one in the Sea of Japan - would be equipped with long-range missile tracking and surveillance capability by the end of 2004. Fifteen would be equipped by early 2006. By the end of 2005, the Navy would have three Aegis cruisers equipped with the Standard Missile 3 system to shoot down short- or medium-range missiles launched against US or allied targets, Taylor said at a conference sponsored by MDA and the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics.

10. ROK Domestic Politics

Agence France-Presse ("SOUTH KOREA'S ACTING PRESIDENT VETOES AMNESTY BILL," Seoul, 03/23/04) reported that the ROK's interim president Goh Kun has vetoed a bill passed by the opposition-dominated parliament to restrict the president's power to grant special amnesties. The bill would have required the president to consult the National Assembly before granting special amnesties. Opposition parties say it would stop the president from abusing his power. But Goh, standing in for impeached President Roh Moo-Hyun, disagreed, sending the bill back to the legislature which can present it again with a two-thirds majority. "There was a report by cabinet ministers that the bill could be unconstitutional by allowing parliament to control presidential amnesty," government spokesman Jung Soon-Kyun said. There were also concerns that the bill could infringe on privacy as it allowed parliament to examine the cases of people put forward as potential amnesty beneficiaries, Jung said after a cabinet meeting presided over by Goh. Parliament approved the bill after the government proposed an amnesty for several aides to former president Kim Dae-Jung, who were convicted and jailed last year for illegally remitting money to the DPRK ahead of a landmark inter-Korean summit in 2000.

11. Taiwan Presidential Election Recounts

New York Times (Keith Bradsher and Joseph Kahn, "TAIWANESE PRESIDENT AGREES TO RECOUNT OF DISPUTED VOTE," Taipei, 03/23/04) reported that Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian of Taiwan agreed Tuesday morning to a recount of his disputed victory by a razor-thin margin in the

presidential elections on Saturday, giving in to pressure from street demonstrations and the US. President Chen said he would instruct lawmakers from his Democratic Progressive Party to vote with lawmakers from the opposition Nationalist Party to pass a special law making the recount possible. The government said a recount could start as soon as Thursday, but could then last for days because considerable work would be involved in recounting and verifying more than 13 million ballots. Taiwanese law normally makes it very difficult to hold a recount. Even the closest of elections - President Chen defeated the Nationalist candidate, Lien Chan, in the initial count on Saturday by just two-tenths of one percent - do not automatically qualify for a recount. Hundreds, and at times thousands, of Nationalist supporters have been occupying the boulevard in front of the Presidential Office since Saturday night. But a greater source of pressure on the government was the conspicuous silence of the US in acknowledging Chen as the winner of a second four-year term. Current Taiwanese law provides for a recount only when fraud or other malfeasance can be demonstrated. The Nationalists contended Monday that they had found some hints of vote rigging. They said they were still looking for evidence to support another contention, first made Saturday, that President Chen might have staged a shooting incident on Friday afternoon - widely described as an assassination attempt - in which he was slightly injured in the abdomen, drawing national sympathy less than 19 hours before the polls opened.

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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