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I. United States

1. US New DPRK Talks Envoy

Agence France-Presse ("STATE DEPARTMENT NAMES NEW NORTH KOREA TALKS ENVOY," 12/23/03) reported that the US State Department named a new special envoy for negotiations with the DPRK five days after he arrived in Beijing on his first official visit. Joseph DeTrani, who held talks with senior PRC officials last week, joined the department in November, said spokesman Richard Boucher. He will serve as special envoy for negotiations with North Korea and as US representative to the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation (KEDO), a consortium set up to implement a now suspended 1994 anti-nuclear pact with Pyongyang. DeTrani over the weekend met PRC Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Fu Ying, director of the foreign ministry's Asian Affairs Department, US officials and China's official Xinhua news agency reported. The talks took place as efforts continued to bring about momentum in stalled talks on the festering Korean problem. The PRC has been trying to convene new six way DPRK nuclear crisis talks but failed to get a new round under way this year as hoped, amid reported divisions between arch foes Washington and Pyongyang on how to end the crisis.

2. Libya and DPRK Denuclearization

Agence France-Presse ("AFTER LIBYA COMES IN FROM THE COLD, NUCLEAR NORTH KOREA ON THE," 12/22/03) reported that the DPRK can expect global diplomatic heat to be the next "rogue state" to fall into line, now that Libya has come in from the cold by renouncing weapons of mass destruction. In a double blow to its defiance, the DPRK has seen US foes Iran and Libya buckle to international pressure to allow scrutiny of their atomic weapons programs. As of early Tuesday Pyongyang time, there had been no response from an unusually reticent official DPRK news agency to Colonel Moamer Kadhafi's move. Libya's capitulation, announced here on Friday, was sure to evoke serious evaluation in the DPRK capital, analysts said. Libya's decision is a victory for a hardline, no tolerance policy, Bush supporters claim. "I hope they (North Korea) are learning an important lesson from this," said Balbina Hwang, a Korea analyst at the conservative Heritage Foundation think tank. But some argued that the Bush administration had as much to learn as the DPRK from the Libyan climb-down, as it seeks to break the deadlock with Pyongyang that pushed planned six-nation crisis talks back from last week to next year. Some analysts argue though that while a victory for US and British diplomacy, Libya's decision was not wholly comparable to North Korea, which is far further along the nuclear road. "The Libyan example is one we should tout to the North Koreans, it is one that we should follow in trying to negotiate an end to their nuclear programs," said Jon Wolfstahl of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "But (Iran and Libya) are not nearly as dangerous to US interests as North Korea -- they did not possess nuclear weapons, North Korea does, so it is a different kettle of fish."

3. Powell on US Diplomacy

New York Times ("Steven R. Wiseman, "POWELL DEFENDS DIPLOMATIC ROLE," Washington, 12/22/03) reported that this is another season of frustration for Secretary of State Colin L. Powell. After a difficult year of trying with mixed success to placate American allies over the Iraq war, Powell is recovering from surgery while former Secretary of State James A. Baker III has been representing the Bush administration in high-level meetings in Europe on Iraq's future. When Saddam Hussein was captured, Powell was notified not by President Bush but by Condoleezza Rice, the national security adviser. The breakthrough with Libya was announced at the White House by Bush last Friday, while the secretary of state was recuperating at home. As he enters the final year of President Bush's current term in office, while refusing to address the question of whether he would serve during a second term, Powell says, however, that he is more determined than ever to counter the perception that diplomacy in general - and his own role in particular - have been marginalized in an administration obsessed with war and terrorism. "When you have a story like the Iraq story, which so dominated everything for most of the year, the message of what we are trying to do could not overcome the daily news that was coming in," Powell said in a telephone interview. "I think there are a lot of things we've done that sometimes get missed in the rush of business." Many of his recent pronouncements have seemed combative, defensive and wistful, reflecting the paradox that although he is the best known member of Bush's cabinet, and a popular figure around the world, he evidently feels his accomplishments have been grossly misunderstood. In an article in the latest issue of Foreign Affairs, one of many summations of policy offered in recent weeks, Powell declares that contrary to popular perception, the US has worked closely with other countries to confront the threat of terrorism, nuclear proliferation and instability. "US strategy is widely accused of being unilateralist by design," Powell wrote. "It isn't. It is often accused of being imbalanced in favor of military methods. It isn't. It is frequently described as being obsessed with terrorism and hence biased toward preemptive war on a global scale. It most certainly is not." In the interview, Powell acknowledged a certain disappointment at having to set the record straight so late in the administration. "It's been frustrating for me at times, and I have been trying in recent months, once Iraq got under way, to talk in these broad terms," he said. "I find you've got to keep chipping away at it."

4. PRC Nuclear Power Plant Foreign Big Invitations

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA INVITES FOREIGN BIDS FOR FOUR NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS," 12/24/03) reported that the PRC is to invite foreign companies to bid for the design and construction of four nuclear power plants in contracts worth billions of dollars, state media said. China National Nuclear Corp (CNNC) and Guangdong Nuclear Power Corp drafted tender documents and sent them to the State Council for approval, CNNC general manager Kang Rixin was quoted as saying by the China Daily. "We will start international bidding once the proposal is approved," Kang said, adding that China will insist on using domestic technology in the plants when selecting international partners. Foreign companies such as Electricite de France, Westinghouse of the US and Japan's Mitsubishi have been scrambling for a piece of the action since Beijing, spurred by a growing power crisis, announced plans for new nuclear facilities earlier this year. Construction of four 1,000 megawatt pressurized water nuclear power facilities is expected to begin in Sanmen, in eastern Zhejiang province, and Lingdong, in southern Guangdong province in 2005. The country has set an ambitious goal of having a nuclear capacity of 36,000 megawatts by the year 2020 -- four times its current level. Nuclear power now accounts for just 1.3 percent of China's electricity supply.

5. Asia Response to US Mad Cow Disease

Agence France-Presse ("ASIAN NATIONS BAN US BEEF IMPORTS," 12/24/03) reported that the ROK and Japan slapped bans on imports of American beef after the US announced its first suspected case of mad cow disease. The agriculture ministries in both Seoul and Tokyo placed temporary bans on the meat's import. Similar bans were issued by Singapore, Taiwan and Malaysia, while Hong Kong, China and the Philippines were said to be looking closely at the situation. Quarantine clearance for all US beef and beef products is suspended at the ROK's airports and seaports to prevent the possible spread of the disease, the ministry said in a statement. "The ministry decides to tentatively suspend the quarantine clearance for US-imported bovine animals... and their products," it said. The suspension, a virtual import ban, would last until US verification of the suspected mad cow disease case was completed, ministry officials said. The ROK is one of Asia's major importers of US beef. The volume reached 186,000 tons last year, or two-thirds of the country's imported beef. US Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman said Tuesday that a cow from Washington state had tested positive for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), or mad cow disease.

6. PRC on Taiwanese Spy Ring

The Associated Press (Christopher Bodeen, "CHINA SAYS IT SMASHED TAIWANESE SPY RING," Shanghai, 12/24/03) reported that the PRC said Wednesday it has broken up a ring that spied for rival Taiwan and that 24 Taiwanese and 19 PRC have been captured and confessed. The announcement, reported by the official Xinhua News Agency, didn't identify those detained or say what they were accused of doing for Taiwan, the self-ruling island that Beijing claims as its territory. Taiwan's government already had denied that its agents were arrested after the story appeared this week in a Hong Kong newspaper. On Wednesday, Taiwan's Vice President Annette Lu dismissed the Xinhua report as an attempt to embarrass President Chen Shui-bian ahead of the island's March 20 presidential election. "Let's not believe in rumors," Lu said during a campaign appearance. "We all know that the Beijing authorities have all kinds of strategies for dealing with Taiwan and interfering with our elections." Xinhua said the group had "conducted activities in violation of the law." It said the suspects were captured and interrogated "strictly in accordance with the law," and that all have been provided with daily necessities and medical services. All were in good health, it said. "State security departments of the PRC mainland have smashed a ring of intelligence agents," Xinhua said, citing an unnamed spokesman for the PRC's security services. "Currently, the case is being further

investigated, though these spies have confessed all their crimes," it said.

7. Taiwan on PRC Espionage Arrests

Agence France-Presse ("TAIWAN DISMISSES REPORTS OF SPY ARRESTS IN CHINA AS 'SMOKESCREEN,'" 12/24/03) reported that Taiwan dismissed reports that PRC authorities had uncovered a Taiwanese spy ring operating on the mainland, saying the news was a ploy by Beijing to influence upcoming presidential elections on the island. "We must unite together and not be deceived by rumors, because, as we all know, Beijing authorities have a great deal of tactics designed to disturb this election," Vice President Annette Lu told reporters. "In my opinion, the so-called Taiwanese spy case is no more than a smokescreen they threw up on purpose to confuse the Taiwanese people," she added. Lu's comments followed a report by PRC state-run Xinhua news agency early Wednesday that the country had broken up a Taiwanese spy ring after a similar report by the Hong Kong-based Ming Pao daily two days ago. Xinhua reported that 24 Taiwanese agents had been arrested along with 19 PRC, quoting a spokesman for the state security authorities. The alleged offences were not made clear but the spokesman was quoted by Xinhua as saying that what the spies did "may bring catastrophes and bitterness to the people of Taiwan". Xinhua said the spies had confessed to their crimes.

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.
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