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I. United States

1. DPRK-US Relations

Agence France-Presse ("BUSH MAKES NEW NORTH KOREA PUSH ON ASIA TRIP," Canberra, 10/23/03) reported that US President George W. Bush wrapped up a whirlwind six-nation trip to Asia and Australia after making a new overture to the DPRK and reinforcing the war on terrorism's Southeast Asian flank. In Bangkok, Bush for the first time offered Pyonygang written security assurances from Washington and its partners as he categorically rejected the DPRK's demand for a bilateral non-aggression treaty. "We're all willing to sign some sort of document, not a treaty, that says 'we won't attack you,' but he (DPRK leader Kim Jong-Il) needs to abandon his nuclear program, and do so in a verifiable way," Bush said. "This requires a degree of patience," the president said on his Canberra-bound Air Force One airplane. "He wanted to have dialogue, we're having dialogue." Aides said Washington was consulting with Beijing, Moscow, Seoul and Tokyo on the form and content of the offer in hopes of making progress toward defusing the year-long crisis over Pyongyang's atomic weapons program.

2. ROK-US Marine Deployment Drills

Agence France-Presse ("US MARINES IN SOUTH KOREA FOR FAST DEPLOYMENT DRILL," Seoul,

10/23/03) reported that some 400 US military personnel have arrived at the southern navy port of Chinhae in the ROK for a drill aimed at speeding up deployment, US military authorities said. The group, including 300 marines and 100 navy personnel, will spend some 15 days drilling the loading and offloading of two ships carrying equipment and supplies for a Marine expeditionary brigade. The marine brigade can fly in from another location on short notice, offload the ships and be ready to conduct military operations in a matter of days, the US military said in a statement. It said the "equipment exchange" drill would involve two US Maritime Preposition ships, namely the MV Phillips and the SS Kopak, both based with Maritime Preposition Squadron-2. The two ships are "strategically positioned to rapidly respond to any crisis in the Pacific region, including the Korean peninsula." The US marines involved in the drill are being deployed from Okinawa, Japan. A US marine officer told AFP the exercise was "not specifically tied" to the crisis over the DPRK's nuclear drive. "But it is important to note that we could rapidly respond to a crisis on the Korean peninsula," he said.

3. PRC-Australian Relations

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA'S HU WELCOMES AUSTRALIAN REGIONAL SECURITY ROLE," 10/24/03) reported that PRC President Hu Jintao said Australia had a role as peacekeeper in the Asia-Pacific, ignoring concerns from some Asian leaders about Canberra playing US "sheriff" in the region. Hu also stressed the importance of the United Nations in resolving international disputes when he became the first Asian leader to address the Australian legislature. "China and Australia have shared interests in keeping the South Pacific and Asia Pacific stable, easing regional tensions and promoting peaceful settlement of hotspot issues," Hu told parliament. "We are both against terrorism and hope for stronger counter-terrorism cooperation." His remarks come a day after US President George W. Bush told the same audience Australia has a "special" regional security role. Some Asian leaders reacted with disquiet last week when Bush referred to Australia as a "sheriff" in the battle against terrorism. Canberra has worked hard in recent years to diminish Asian anger over a 1999 comment by Australian Prime Minister John Howard describing Australia as the US' regional "deputy sheriff". In an apparent veiled reference to Australia's decision to join the US-led invasion of Iraq even though it was not backed by the United Nations, Hu said world leaders should recognize the importance of the international body. "Members of the international community should reaffirm their commitment to multilateralism and give full scope to the importance of the United Nations and its security council in maintaining world peace and security," he said.

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA'S HU ADDRESSES AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT, EYES LONG-TERM TRADE TIES," 10/24/03) reported that PRC President Hu Jintao said in an unprecedented speech to the Australian parliament that his country wants to become Australia's long-term economic partner as trade ties enter a new era. In the first address to the federal legislature by an Asian leader, Hu said China's rapid growth and Australia's abundance of resources gave them complementary economies. As Canberra's lawmakers listened quietly -- avoiding the heckling that saw two senators ordered from the chamber during a similar address by US President George W. Bush Thursday -- Hu also said Australia had a role as a regional peacekeeper. "We are ready to be your long-term and stable cooperation partner, dedicated to closer cooperation based on equality and mutual benefit," Hu told parliament. He said an economic development framework to be signed on Friday marked "a new stage of our trade and economic cooperation". Hu and Prime Minister John Howard are also expected to announce a 30 billion dollar (20.7 billion US) gas supply deal Friday, in what would be Australia's largest ever export contract. Hu reaffirmed Beijing's claim to Taiwan during his wide-ranging speech and called on world leaders to recognise the importance of the United Nations in resolving international disputes. The comment was an apparent veiled reference to Australia's decision to join the US-led invasion of Iraq, even though it was not backed by the United Nations.

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4. Japan Domestic Politics

Agence France-Presse ("KOIZUMI'S RULING PARTY SEEN EASILY DEFEATING MAIN OPPOSITION: POLL," 10/24/03) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) is expected to easily beat the main opposition in next month's general election, according to a poll. The survey, conducted by the Yomiuri Shimbun, found that 37 percent of respondents would vote for LDP candidates in the single-seat constituencies for the November 9 lower house election. Some 12 percent of respondents said they would vote for candidates of the main opposition Democratic Party, the poll showed. The ratio of respondents backing LDP candidates in the single-seat constituencies is about four percentage points higher than pre-election surveys in both the 1996 and 2000 elections, the mass-circulation daily said. In the proportional representation section, 35 percent of respondents supported the LDP, compared to 14 percent who backed the Democratic Party, the poll showed. A total of 300 lower house seats are filled through individual constituencies and the remaining 180 seats are selected through proportional representation. The daily carried out the survey Saturday and Sunday, with 1,869 responses. In September, the Democratic Party merged with the smaller Liberal Party, bringing their combined strength to 137 seats against 244 for the LDP in the lower house.

5. PRC Envoy DPRK Visit

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA TO SEND TOP ENVOY TO NORTH KOREA," Beijing, 10/23/03) reported that the PRC said it will dispatch a top envoy to the DPRK next week, signaling a potential breakthrough in the nuclear crisis although optimism is tempered by the regime's rejection of US concessions. Parliamentary chief Wu Bangguo, the country's number two leader, will head a delegation of communist party, government and military officials to Pyongyang from October 29-31 in a trip the foreign ministry called "official" and "friendly". Accompanying him will be Wang Yi, the PRC's chief negotiator in the first round of six-way nuclear talks that ended inconclusively in August. "China and the DPRK are friendly neighbours and have a tradition of exchanges of high level visits," said foreign ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue of a trip also announced by Pyongyang. "During such important visits, both sides will exchange in-depth views on regional and international affairs and issues of common concern," Zhang added. It was not confirmed whether there would be a meeting with Kim Jong-Il, who emerged on Tuesday from a 40-day media blackout, although the ROK's Yonhap news agency quoted a source as saying talks would take place on October 30. "The DPRK side is still making some concrete arrangements for this visit," said Zhang.

6. Japan Domestic Economics

The Associated Press (Audrey McAvoy, "REPORT: JAPAN'S FUTURE GROWTH THREATENED," Tokyo, 10/23/03) reported that already mired in its worst economic slump in decades, Japan may well see its growth decline even further as its citizens age and its population shrinks, the government said in an annual economic assessment released Friday. The report suggested Japan needs to take stronger measures to encourage people to have more children, and to make its domestic markets more attractive to foreign investment. "Japan is experiencing aging unprecedented in history," said Jun Saito, the director of economic policy and analysis at the Cabinet Office, which authored the report. Addressing the aging problem for the first time, the annual

assessment noted the country's population between the ages of 16 and 54 has already started to slide and added that growing numbers of retirees are trimming the nation's huge savings pool. Economists say Japan's high saving rate was a major factor driving the country's rapid growth in the decades after World War II. The savings households deposited in Japanese banks provided a ready supply of capital that industry borrowed to invest in new plants and equipment. But today, Japan is a net creditor to the world and attracts little in the way of foreign savings - one source of funds countries often turn to when there is a shortage at home, Saito said. Along with attracting overseas capital and raising labor productivity, the report stressed the need to help women have careers and children, instead of choosing one or the other. Saito said one option would be to set up more day-care centers, a step the government pursues now. The report said the average Japanese woman now faces incentives not to have children: She loses 85 million yen ($772,000) over her lifetime if she quits her job to give birth - even if she returns to work afterward. The current statistics are ominous. Japan's birthrate - which measures the average number of times a woman gives birth during her lifetime - dropped to 1.32 in 2002, the lowest on record, and after peaking in 2005, the population is on track to shrink by nearly a fifth by 2050, the government says. The changing demographic is already straining the country's pension system, with the government forecasting those now in their 20s through 40s will pay more into the system than they will receive due to the large numbers of elderly the country will support in coming years. This is causing more young people to opt out of paying into the system, creating an additional burden on government coffers.

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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