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I. United States

1. US Trade Bill on PRC

The Washington Post (Matthew Vita and Juliet Eilperin, "HOUSE EASILY PASSES CHINA TRADE BILL," 5/25/00) reported that the US House of Representatives voted 237 to 197 to grant permanent normal trade relations to the PRC on May 24. Speaking at the White House minutes after the vote, US President Bill Clinton hailed the House action, saying that it will boost economic growth in the US, strengthen US national security, and promote democracy and human rights in the PRC. Approval of the bill seems certain in the predominantly pro-free-trade US Senate next month, although Senate Republicans indicated that human rights and trade measures inserted into the bill in the House will require review. [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for May 25, 2000.]

2. PRC Military Exercises

Agence France Presse ("CHINA BEGINS MILITARY MANEUVERS, TAIWAN DOWNPLAYS THREAT," Taipei, 5/25/00) and Reuters (Alice Hung, "CHINA TO HOLD FIRING DRILLS, TAIWAN SAYS,"

Taipei, 5/25/00) reported that the Taiwan defense ministry said the PRC's People's Liberation Army (PLA) launched a week-long military live- fire artillery exercise Thursday around Quanzhou Bay in the southeastern province of Fujian, near to Kinmen, a fortified outlying island controlled by Taiwanese troops. The ministry said that the maneuvers were not intended to target Taiwan. A defense ministry spokesman said, "it is merely part of the PLA's many routine drills," and the major weapons involved were mortars and howitzers. Koo Chen-fu, chairman of Taiwan's quasi-official intermediary body, the Straits Exchange Foundation, stated, "as the defense ministry said, it is merely a routine one. I believe both sides will exercise restraint." [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for May 25, 2000.]

3. Cross-Straits Relations

Agence France Presse ("CHINA PUTS HEAT ON CHEN SHUI-BIAN OVER 'COVERT' INDEPENDENCE STANCE," Beijing, 5/25/00) reported that the PRC's official Xinhua News Agency reported in a commentary on Thursday that the PRC is ratcheting up the pressure on Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian. The report accused Chen of adopting a "covert Taiwan independence stance." It continued, "as the Taiwan leader has not given up his 'Taiwan independence' stance, he has no sincerity and goodwill to create a new age of reconciliation." The commentary accused Chen's recent remarks of having the same "nature" as those made by Chen's predecessor Lee Teng-hui. The commentary attacked Chen for only mentioning the "One China" principle once in his inauguration speech on May 20, while mentioning the word Taiwan 40 times. It said, "the Taiwan leader called the One China principle a question in his speech, which has the same nature as the 'two-states' remark and the 'two Chinese nations.'" It warned Chen, however, that the "One China" principle was not a question but a basic premise for the reunification of China.

4. Taiwan Spying Threat to US

The Washington Times (Bill Gertz, "TAIWAN THREAT DESIGNATION 'REGRETTABLE'," 5/25/00) reported that James Soong, chairman of the new People First Party and the runner-up in Taiwan's March 18 presidential election, said on May 24 that the US Clinton administration's designation of Taiwan as a hostile intelligence threat is "regrettable." Soong said, "we have never sent any espionage agents to the United States." The Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Washington issued a statement saying it was "shocked and dismayed" to be named a major national-security threat. The statement said, "we have never engaged in or sponsored any information-gathering activities that were illegal or that posed a threat to U.S. security. We feel that any such designation would be ill- advised and most regrettable." White House National Security Council spokesman P.J. Crowley declined to comment when asked why the administration considers Taiwan a national-security threat. [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for May 25, 2000.]

5. US Policy toward Taiwan

The Washington Times published an opinion article by Larry Niksch, a specialist in Asian affairs for the US Congressional Research Service ("IGNORED ISSUE IN THE TAIWAN DEBATE," 5/25/00) which said that the US Clinton administration's recent decisions on arms sales to Taiwan came amidst the publicized debate between the administration and its critics, and the reported debate between the US Defense Department and the White House, over how best to support Taiwan's security. However, the debate over weapons systems was limited to the kind of systems to be sold to Taiwan, and all the weapons systems were defensive with a heavy emphasis on anti-missile defense.

There was also a long-range time perspective. However, Niksch wrote, "the debate largely omits consideration of threats and responses in the near term, especially the timeframe of China's missile buildup. There also are questions regarding the effectiveness of the weapons systems proposed for Taiwan. China may be able to overwhelm any missile defense system with a mass attack of hundreds of missiles. None of the systems being debated would give Taiwan the capability to conduct counterstrikes against the launch sites of Chinese military operations." Niksch also noted that the debate contained no discussion of the question "If China continues to build up its military power opposite Taiwan, what combination of military and diplomatic measures would provide the highest probability of deterring China from deciding on the military option?" He added that the limitations of the debate will also not be altered so long as it pays no attention to the issue of the adequacy of the US force structure in the Western Pacific to influence the situation in the Taiwan Strait. Niksch noted that if the PRC continues to escalate its threats and military buildup, it will examine closely the indicators of US intent and military capabilities and increasingly link US intent with US military capabilities in the region. Therefore, regardless of the scale of future arms sales to Taiwan, the US will need a fundamental restructuring of US forces in the Western Pacific - a decision that needs to be a central element in the US debate over Taiwan policy. [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for May 25, 2000.]

6. Alleged PRC Spying in Japan

Agence France Presse ("JAPANESE DESTROYER TRACKS SUSPECTED CHINESE SPY SHIP," Tokyo, 5/25/00) reported that Japanese defense officials said on Thursday that Japan has dispatched a 2,950-ton destroyer to track a suspected PRC spy ship which passed through Japan's northern straits. The officials said that the PRC "Yanbing" class icebreaker passed through the Tsugaru-kaikyo strait on May 23, but did so legally by remaining in international waters. A Defense Agency spokesman said, "this is the first time since the naval defense forces started monitoring the seas that a Chinese naval vessel has gone up the Sea of Japan from Tsushima to pass through the Tsugaru-kaigyo strait." Japan's defense forces on May 23 dispatched the 2,950-ton Sawayuki, a "Hatsuyuki" class destroyer equipped with Sea Sparrow SAM short-range missiles and an anti-submarine helicopter, to monitor the icebreaker's progress. Chief Cabinet Secretary Mikio Aoki told a news conference that there were no legal problems with the vessel's progress through the Tsugaru-kaikyo strait, but "there is a possibility it is conducting some kind of intelligence activity as the vessel is equipped with intelligence capacity."

II. Republic of Korea

1. Russian View of US Missile Defense

The Korea Herald (Shin, Young-bae, "N. KOREA MISSILE POSES NO THREAT TO U.S., RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR SAYS," Seoul, 05/25/00) reported that the top Russian envoy to the ROK on May 24 criticized the US National Missile Defense (NMD) program. Russian Ambassador Evgeny Afanasiev said, "If the U.S. puts the NMD project into action, it will greatly undermine stability in Northeast Asia and lead to an arms race in the region." He said that the US should not promote the project under the pretext of a DPRK missile threat "because the North's ICBMs would not realistically pose a threat to the United States." Afanasiev also indicated that the Russian government opposed the continued stationing of US forces in the ROK, describing the presence of US troops as the "legacy of history." [Ed. note: This article was included in the US Department of Defense's Early Bird news service for May 25, 2000.]

2. Russian President's Trip to Korean Peninsula

The Korea Herald (Shin Yong-bae, "PUTIN TO COME TO SEOUL LATER THIS YEAR, MAY ALSO VISIT PYONGYANG, OFFICIAL SAYS," Moscow, 05/25/00) reported that a ranking Russian official said that Russian President Vladimir Putin will visit the ROK within the next few months to discuss areas of mutual concern. A diplomatic source in the ROK said that Putin would come to the ROK between July and September. Moiseyev also said that he would not rule out the possibility of Putin visiting the DPRK. If Putin travels to the DPRK, he would become the first Russian head of state to do so since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Moiseyev said that DPRK Foreign Minister Paek Nam-sun would visit Russia this year to cement bilateral political and economic cooperation. Confirming Russia's full support for the inter-Korean summit, Moiseyev said, "The success of the summit will surely expedite inter-Korean business cooperation involving Russia, including the Trans-Siberian Railroad (TSR) project." He stressed that Russia hopes to link Siberia and the two Koreas by rail and that concrete inter-Korean programs to construct the railroad would likely be discussed after the June summit.

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