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I. United States

1. DPRK-US Relations

Reuters ("N.KOREA SAYS US DITCHING TRUCE, RAISING TENSIONS," Seoul, 04/25/04) reported that the DPRK accused the US on Sunday of abandoning a 50-year-old truce by deciding to withdraw its forces from the heavily fortified Demilitarized Zone that divides the Korean peninsula. But US and ROK officials said the DPRK military, in a statement issued by the official KCNA news agency,

had misconstrued the US' position on the Demilitarized Zone and the truce village of Panmunjom. They said the US had no intention of giving up its command in the truce village. The Panmunjom mission of the Korean People's Army said in its statement the US had announced "all of a sudden" it was withdrawing completely from the Demilitarized Zone and the so-called Joint Security Area that straddles the border in the truce village. "The report is completely factually in error," US Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Deborah Bertrand said. "The US retains its presence in and command of the Joint Security Area." Bertrand was speaking for the US Forces in Korea, the United Nations Command that enforces the Armistice Agreement and the Combined Forces Command that brings together the US and ROK military.

2. PRC on DPRK Nuclear Situation The Associated Press (Edith M. Lederer, "CHINA'S U.N. AMBASSADOR SEES SIGNS THAT NORTH KOREA IS MOVING TOWARD OPENING UP," United Nations, 04/24/04) reported that the PRC's U.N. ambassador sees signs that the DPRK is moving toward opening up to the outside world and showing flexibility in the standoff over its nuclear programs. Wang Guangya said this week's visit to the PRC by DPRK leader Kim Jong Il - his last visit three years ago - the country's economic reforms, and its "unusual" request for international assistance following Thursday's deadly train explosion "all head in that direction." "But sometimes because they have different feelings about their environment, they retreat," he said. "Then they move forward again. I hope the country will move in the right direction," he said in an interview on Friday. Wang urged the international community "to be forthcoming, be positive in responding to their request" for help for the victims of the train blast. "As far as specific programs, both sides have to agree to work it out," Wang said. "We agreed to continue and also to increase our economic assistance." The DPRK is trying to reform its economy "because without changes in their economy they will remain in bad shape, so they realize this," he said.

3. DPRK on Nuclear Transfer

The Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA VOWS IT WON'T TRANSFER NUKES," Beijing, 04/24/04) reported that DPRK officials angrily denied US accusations that they might sell nuclear weapons to terrorists and offered to freeze a plutonium-based nuclear program in exchange for aid, an American researcher who visited the DPRK said Saturday. However, the officials wouldn't confirm whether Pyongyang has a second, uranium-based weapons program, a key sticking point in talks with the US and other governments, said Selig S. Harrison of the Center for International Policy in Washington. The comments, similar to previous DPRK offers, did not appear to represent any new concession that might revive progress in the six-nation talks aimed at persuading the DPRK to eliminate its nuclear program. DPRK leaders criticized US Vice President Dick Cheney's suggestion during a visit to the PRC this month that the DPRK might sell weapons to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network or other terror groups, Harrison said. Foreign Minister Paek Nam Sun said North Koreans "denounce al-Qaida," said Harrison, who returned from Pyongyang on Saturday and was en route to Washington. "We are opposed to all types of terrorism and will never transfer our nuclear material to anyone else," he quoted Paek as saying. "Our nuclear program is solely for our own self-defense." Harrison also met this week with Kim Yong Nam, the country's No. 2 leader; Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye Gwan and Lt. Gen. Ri Chan Bok, chief military liaison officer at the Demilitarized Zone. According to Harrison, Kim Yong Nam said the DPRK trades in missiles, but would never allow a transfer of nuclear material to al-Qaida or anyone else.

4. US DPRK Humanitarian Aid

Bloomberg ("POWELL SAYS US TO PROVIDE MORE AID TO NORTH KOREA," 04/26/04) reported

that US Secretary of State Colin Powell said the US will deliver more humanitarian aid to the DPRK following a deadly train explosion last week. "We're working with the United Nations," Powell said in Washington following a meeting with Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Moeller. "And we will be making an offer of some financial assistance. And we are waiting to see what the need is and what else we might be able to do." The rail explosion occurred 15 kilometers (10 miles) from the PRC border city of Dandong last Thursday, injured 1,300 people and flattened 1,800 homes. Among the 161 people dead were 76 children whose school was incinerated when two rail cars carrying inflammable cargoes exploded into a fireball.

5. DPRK ROK Disaster Aid Rejection

Agence France-Presse ("NORTH KOREA STUNS SOUTH KOREA WITH DISASTER AID REJECTION," Seoul, 04/26/04) reported that the DPRK stunned the ROK by blocking an offer from the ROK for swift aid to train blast victims in a signal that barriers remained to its embrace of international relief efforts. The DPRK turned down Seoul's offer to transport emergency aid directly through the tense inter-Korean border that would have brought early relief to victims of last week's explosion in which at least 161 people died and 1,300 were injured. "North Korea rejected our proposed overland transportation of emergency relief goods," said Moon Won-Il, spokesman for the ROK's National Red Cross. "North Korea did not elaborate on the reason." The DPRK's decision surprised the ROK who have been mobilized by feelings of brotherly compassion to stage a major relief effort for disaster victims in the DPRK. "The North called for shipping emergency relief goods to its (southwestern) port of Nampo by sea, rather than overland," said Hong Jae-Hyun, director general for social and cultural exchanges with North Korea at the ROK Unification Ministry. He said both sides would discuss "technical details" of the proposed transportation at the town of Kaesong, just over the border inside North Korea, on Tuesday. "We do not know the exact reason, but we just presume that North Korea might be concerned about security issues involved in allowing cross-border transportation," said a ministry official who declined to be named.

6. Hong Kong Democratization

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA RULES OUT DIRECT ELECTIONS FOR HONG KONG LEADER IN 2007," 04/26/04) reported that the PRC ruled out direct elections for Hong Kong's leaders in 2007, extinguishing hopes of a swift transition to full democracy. In a widely expected decision, the PRC's National People's Congress ruled that universal suffrage would not be used to elect Hong Kong's chief executive in 2007 or the territory's legislature a year later. "Conditions do not satisfy the general election of the Chief Executive after nomination of a nomination committee with broad representation through democratic procedures," the ruling, reported by Xinhua news agency, said. The Communist-controlled NPC's powerful standing committee had earlier this month stunned democracy activists in Hong Kong by ruling that any electoral reforms must be approved by Beijing. Analysts said the ruling breached the "one country, two systems" formula used to govern Hong Kong since the 1997 handover from Britain, and reflected Beijing's nervousness over increasing demands for democracy in the territory.

Agence France-Presse ("HONG KONG LEADER CALLS FOR CALM AFTER CHINA RULES OUT FULL DEMOCRACY," 04/26/04) reported that Hong Kong chief executive Tung Chee-hwa called on the public to remain "calm and rational" after the PRC ruled out a transition to full democracy in the former British colony by 2007. "I urge various quarters of the community to be calm and rational and set aside differences, disputes and pre-conceived notions ... and strive for a consensus on the constitutional development in Hong Kong," he stated at a press conference. "The overriding concern of the central government is to maintain the well-being of Hong Kong ... our fundamental interest is

to ensure economic development and also to maintain a sound relationship between the central government and Hong Kong," he said. Tung stressed that he wanted to achieve universal suffrage through "a gradual and orderly manner" but did not spell out a timetable as to when full democracy will be allowed. Chief Secretary Donald Tsang, who leads a taskforce charged with the city's political reforms, said he will prepare a report in May setting out how the next stage of electoral reforms should proceed. He also called for an end to the confrontation and bitter disputes which have characterized the debate over Hong Kong's reform. "I believe that the community now has a golden opportunity to demonstrate our political maturity. Individuals and organizations of different backgrounds ... should come together and not to waste time on confrontations, collisions or arguments that go beyond Beijing's decision," he said.

7. Japan Domestic Politics

Agence France-Presse ("KOIZUMI MARKS THIRD YEAR IN OFFICE BOOSTED BY POLL WINS," 04/26/04) reported that Japan's Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi marked his third anniversary in office boosted by firm public support and a clean sweep for his ruling party in weekend by-elections. "My policy of 'no reform, no recovery' does not waver," Koizumi said Monday in parliament after his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) won all three seats contested in Sunday's ballots in the run-up to national polls in July. "I am now convinced my reform policy was right," he said, arguing curbs on fiscal spending by the government had led to signs of emerging recovery by the Japanese economy. "I want to make these bright signs spread to regional cities and smaller companies (from major cities and giant corporations) by stepping up reforms," he said. A weekend telephone poll of 1,000 adults by the TV Tokyo private network revealed strong support for Koizumi among voters. About 53 percent of those questioned backed the premier, down from the sky-high 81 percent immediately after he took office but up from 45 percent after his first year in office.

8. US Missile Defense Criticism

The Associated Press ("KEY US MISSILE DEFENSE COMPONENTS NOT YET TESTED UNDER REALISTIC CONDITIONS," Washington, 04/24/04) reported that key elements of a US national missile defense system scheduled for initial deployment later this year have not been tested under realistic conditions, making it difficult to assess their ability to perform, US congressional investigators have found. The conclusion made by the General Accounting Office the investigative arm of the US Congress, comes as the administration of President George W. Bush is forging ahead with deployment of the multi-layered system designed to protect the US from missiles launched by rogue states such as North Korea and Iran. The current plan calls for deploying the first 10 missile interceptors at Fort Greely, Alaska, and Vandenberg Air Force Base in California by this September and doubling their number by December 2005. However, the GAO report made public Friday casts doubt about the effectiveness of the initial deployment because of testing deficiencies and production delays. "As a result of testing shortfalls, the predicted effectiveness of the Block 2004 system will be largely unproven," the agency said. It went on to say that the testing program carried out last year "did little to demonstrate the predicted effectiveness" of the system and its ability to reliably shoot down incoming missiles. The GAO held out little hope for improvement this year. Although the Pentagon is trying to make flight tests as realistic as possible, "these tests will not be conducted under the unscripted conditions that characterize operational testing," the report said. Moreover, technical problems and production delays were likely to result in failure to meet initial deployment goals, the investigators predicted. Only five missile interceptors are now expected to be deployed by September 2004, and the deployment of all 20 kill vehicles by December 2005 is "uncertain", the report warned. Defense contractors "have not demonstrated they can meet the increased production rate," the GAO concluded.

9. Japan-ROK Relations

Yonhap ("JAPANESE FOREIGN MINISTER TO VISIT SOUTH KOREA," Seoul, 04/25/04) reported that Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi will visit South Korea next month for discussions on the DPRK nuclear problem, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade said Sunday. Kawaguchi will meet with his ROK counterpart Ban Ki-moon during her visit from May 1-2 for discussions on the date of working-level negotiations ahead of the six-way talks aimed at resolving the dispute surrounding North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

10. PRC SARS Resurgence?

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA'S SARS SCARE HAS POTENTIAL TO BECOME EPIDEMIC, WHO WARNS," 04/26/04) reported that the PRC's latest SARS outbreak is not yet a serious threat to public health but the disease may have spread widely through the country's rail network, the World Health Organization (WHO) said. The WHO is concerned that the outbreak -- so far limited to two confirmed cases and six suspected -- could turn into an epidemic because the index patient, a medical researcher, had taken a long train journey after contracting the disease. "Because of the long train journey it is not so easy to trace all of the possible contacts," WHO Western Pacific regional director Shigeru Omi told a news conference here Monday. "From our experience with SARS last year we know hospitals have a tendency to amplify the infection." But he added: "We do not see this yet as a serious public health threat." Omi noted that millions of PRC will be on the move throughout the country and abroad during a national holiday next month.

11. DPRK International Trade Fair

Korean Central News Agency ("DPRK TO HOLD INT'L TRADE FAIR MID-MAY," Pyongyang, 04/26/04) reported that the Seventh Pyongyang International Trade Fair will be held from mid-May under the sponsorship of the Korean International Exhibition Corporation. Rolling stocks, machines and equipment, apparatuses for developing up-to-the-minute technologies, electronic, electrical and metal goods, light industrial goods, foodstuffs, daily necessities and other commodities will be exhibited. Director of the corporation Ri Su-dok told KCNA that during the fair, companies of many countries will discuss such issues as the promotion of trade and cooperative relations and investment in and economic cooperation with the DPRK. More than 100 companies from over ten countries including Russia, China, Malaysia, Syria, Thailand and Italy have applied for the participation in the fair and have been registered. The number of applicants is on the increase.

12. DPRK Ship Japan Visit

Kyodo ("NORTH KOREA SHIP VISITS JAPAN AS LAWMAKERS SEEK TO BAN ENTRY," Niigata, 04/26/04) reported that the DPRK ferry Mangyongbong-92 arrived in Japan on Monday (26 April) morning, making its first call at Niigata port on the Sea of Japan coast since governing coalition lawmakers presented a bill to the Diet earlier this month aimed at barring the ship from entering Japanese ports. Japanese authorities, after conducting two separate safety inspections the same day, said they found no defects or irregularities in the ship's facilities. Officials from the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport conducted the "port state control" safety inspections on the ship and said there were no serious flaws that would require the authorities to order it to make improvements to clear requirements for departure. Japan Coast Guard, customs and immigration officials, who jointly implemented their on-site inspections, said they detected no shortcomings. The ship came into view at the port around 8.30 a.m. (local time) along with a patrol ship from the Japan Coast

Guard. It was met by members of group calling for rescue of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korea, who shouted "Mangyongbong go home!" Pro-DPRK Korean residents of Japan also met the ferry, cheering in Korean. After the 9,672-ton ship, which arrived from the DPRK port of Wonsan, docked, about 100 Japanese officials boarded the ship for inspections.

13. DPRK on Ryongchon Railway Explosion

Korean Central News Agency ("TRAIN EXPLOSION DAMAGE 'VERY SERIOUS,'" Pyongyang, 04/24/04) reported that an explosion occurred at Ryongchon railway station in North Phyongan (P'yongan) province on 22 April due to the electrical contact caused by carelessness during the shunting of wagons loaded with ammonium nitrate fertilizer and tank wagons. The investigation conducted so far shows that the damage is very serious. It is going on. The DPRK government is doing its utmost to recover from the damage caused by the accident as early as possible and help the living of the people in the afflicted area return to normal. It appreciates the willingness expressed by the governments of various countries and international bodies and organizations to render humanitarian assistance to the DPRK.

14. Russia on DPRK Railway Recover

The ITAR-TASS ("DPRK ARMY NOT INVOLVED IN RECOVERY WORK IN STRICKEN TOWN," Pyongyang, 04/24/04) reported that the army of the DPRK is not taking part in the recovery work in the town of Ryongchon, the head of the committee supervising recovery work in the damaged part of the town, Jang Song-Gun, told an ITAR-TASS correspondent today. A huge explosion killed 154 people and destroyed hundreds of buildings in Ryongchon on 22 April. Foreign experts in Pyongyang believe the army has not been brought in because Ryongchon is in the immediate vicinity of the special economic zone of Sinuiju, on the border with PRC. The experts think that the DPRK leadership may have decided not to put troops in there and not announce a state of emergency in order not to frighten off investors.

II. Japan

1. Japan Iraq Troops Dispatch

The Asahi Shimbun ("KUDOS FOR TOKYO'S TOUGH STANCE IN IRAQI CRISIS," 04/19/04) reported that 64 percent of The Asahi Shimbun survey respondents said they supported how the Japanese government dealt with the crisis in which three Japanese were held captive. Moreover, 73 percent of respondents agreed with the government's rejection of the group's demand for the withdrawal of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) from Iraq. Twenty-two percent did not support the government's handling of the crisis, and only 16 percent opposed the government's refusal to pull out the SDF. Meanwhile, support for US policy toward Iraq had declined dramatically, from 21 percent to 12 percent, since the previous survey conducted in January. On the continued deployment of the Japanese troops in Iraq, 50 percent of respondents were in favor, while 32 percent said the SDF should withdraw. Those who expressed their support for the continued SDF deployment in Iraq had different reasons. At least 57 percent of them chose the reason, "The SDF will help reconstruct Iraq," while 21 percent selected the option, "We must not give in to terrorism." In contrast, 47 percent of those in favor of the SDF withdrawal chose the reason, "The SDF is likely to get caught in combat and terrorism," and 39 percent selected the option, "The SDF deployment itself has a problem." The Asahi Shimbun interviewed about 1,700 people in a random sample by telephone on Friday, and 820 people, or 48

percent, gave valid responses.

Mainichi Daily News ("JAPAN'S STANCE ON IRAQ GETS PUBLIC SUPPORT: POLL," 04/19/04) reported that almost two-thirds of Mainichi pollees are in support of Japan's decision to refuse the withdrawal of its troops from Iraq. To the question about the government's refusal to submit to the hostage takers' demand for the withdrawal of Self Defense Forces (SDF), 65 percent were in favor while 29 percent didn't support the stance. When asked for reasons why they were in favor of the government's refusal, 39 percent in favor of the decision said the withdrawal of the SDF was equal to giving in to the hostage takers. Another 37 percent said they believed that the SDF's humanitarian work was necessary for the reconstruction of the war-torn country. Of those who didn't support Japan's refusal to withdraw, 43 percent said they believed the dispatch of the SDF was only to support the US-led occupation.

2. Japan Hostage Crisis in Iraq

The Japan Times ("FREED CAPTIVE NOT SORRY HE WENT TO IRAQ," 04/19/04) reported that one of the two Japanese taken captive by gunmen near Baghdad and freed Saturday has told a friend in Tokyo that he does not believe he did the wrong thing by entering the war-ravaged country, despite being warned by the Japanese government not to do so. Nobutaka Watanabe, 36, a member of the Tokyo-based nongovernmental organization Trans-Pacific GI/SDF Rights Hotline, was freed along with his roommate, Junpei Yasuda, a freelance journalist, after being abducted in a Baghdad suburb. "I feel sorry for causing everybody to be concerned. But I do not think my actions were wrong. I don't want to apologize for what I did," Watanabe said in a phone call he made from Baghdad to the Tokyo office of Trans-Pacific GI/SDF Rights Hotline. Watanabe had been dispatched to Iraq by the NGO in February and had originally planned to stay there for about half a year. He was recently monitoring the activities of the GSDF troops deployed in Samawah.

The Asahi Shimbun ("2 FREED HOSTAGES GET COOLER WELCOME FROM MINISTRY," Amman, 04/20/04) reported that subtle differences in the government's handling of the two groups of released Japanese civilians were apparent as they headed home following a harrowing week. "Just now, we were questioned by Japanese police in charge of overseas affairs. I agreed to speak to them because I thought it would be easier than being summoned by police after returning home," a bitter Nobutaka Watanabe, one of the abductees, told reporters at an Amman hotel Sunday after a three-hour stay at the embassy. Officially, the Foreign Ministry position is that Watanabe and Yasuda were free to go after leaving Iraq. But Japanese Embassy staff in Amman kept close tabs on every word the two said.

The Japan Times ("TOKYO, HOKKAIDO POLICE TO QUESTION TRIO OF FREED HOSTAGES," 04/20/04) reported that Tokyo and Hokkaido Prefectural Police investigators will soon question the three Japanese released on April 15 to learn more about their ordeal, police sources said Monday. Police are allowed to question them based on the revised Police Law, which gives the National Police Agency more authority to investigate crimes abroad involving Japanese citizens.

3. Japan Domestic Politics

The Asahi Shimbun ("STILL POPULAR: KOIZUMI WINS 50% SUPPORT AT 3RD YEAR," 04/20/04) reported that the survey found that 50 percent of respondents supported the Koizumi Cabinet. In May 2001, soon after taking office, Koizumi's Cabinet received an 84 percent support rating, the highest ever for an Asahi poll. While support plummeted to 49 percent in February 2002 soon after Koizumi dismissed popular Foreign Minister Makiko Tanaka, it has recovered to over 50 percent

since last September when Koizumi was re-elected as Liberal Democratic Party president. But when asked about issue areas, 67 percent of respondents said they were not satisfied with Koizumi's pension-reform efforts and 61 percent were dissatisfied with the economic-stimulation measures. On the privatization of the road corporations and postal system, 51 percent were satisfied with the Cabinet's policies, while 37 percent said they were not. Seventy-one percent of respondents said structural reform was necessary. When asked if Koizumi had sufficiently argued Japan's position and thinking in relation to the US, only 41 percent said yes, while 56 percent said Koizumi had failed to do so. Koizumi took office promising to "destroy the LDP." However, three years later, only 45 percent of the Asahi respondents said the LDP had changed, while 49 percent said the ruling party had not changed.

III. CanKor E-Clipping Service

1. Issue #162

A devastating explosion rocks the city of Ryongchon near North Korea's border with China. Initial reports from South Korea presume a collision of trains carrying fuel and chemicals, and put the number of dead at up to 3,000. The DPRK Red Cross Society speaks of 54 dead and 1249 injured, with thousands of homes and apartments destroyed. Government sources say that a train carrying explosives was touched by live power lines, detonating the cargo. Hours before the accident, North Korea's leader Kim Jong Il returns by train from a not-so-secret state visit to Beijing, prompting rumours of sabotage. Intelligence officials reserve judgement on whether the three nuclear devices Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan claims to have seen in a secret underground nuclear plant in North Korea were bombs or decoys. North American Mennonites send Canadian English teachers to Pyongyang in two-month relays. University of Alberta academics "map" North Korea coverage in major Western internet-based news media. In this week's FOCUS section, Amnesty International critiques South Korea's arrest, interrogation and sentencing of Song Du-yul, a philosophy professor with German citizenship, for exercising "his right to freedom of expression in a non-violent manner." The ROK representative to the 60th UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva explains why, for the second year in a row, South Korea abstains from voting on a resolution criticizing the DPRK's human rights record.

For more info: <http://www.cankor.ca>

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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