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I. United States

1. US Office of Strategic Influence

The New York Times (Eric Schmitt and James Dao, "A 'DAMAGED' INFORMATION OFFICE IS DECLARED CLOSED BY RUMSFELD," Washington, 02/27/02), the Wall Street Journal, (Greg Jaffe, "PENTAGON BOWS TO CRITICS AND CLOSES ITS NEW OFFICE OF STRATEGIC INFLUENCE," Washington, 02/27/02) and the Washington Post (Thomas E. Ricks, "RUMSFELD KILLS PENTAGON PROPAGANDA UNIT," 02/27/02) reported that US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said, "The office has clearly been so damaged that it is pretty clear to me that it could not function effectively. So it is being closed down." Rumsfeld also stated that there were never any plans to plant false stories in the foreign media. Rumsfeld pledged that the Pentagon would not plant false stories in the media, either at home or abroad. "We are not doing it now. We will not be doing it in the future," he said. The Office of Strategic Information's activities will be handled by other Pentagon offices, he said. Asked if the Pentagon's long-term credibility had been damaged by the furor over the office, Mr. Rumsfeld said, "I doubt it. I hope not. If it has, we'll rebuild it." [These two articles also appeared in the US State Department's Early Bird Report for February 27, 2002.]

2. Russia-US Anti-terror War

The New York Times, (Eric Schmitt, "U.S. MAY SEND G.I.'S TO EX-SOVIET AREA," Washington, 02/27/02) and the Washington Post (Vernon Loeb and Peter Slevin, "U.S. BEGINS ANTI-TERROR ASSISTANCE IN GEORGIA," Washington, 02/27/02) reported that the US Pentagon has begun providing combat helicopters to the former Soviet republic of Georgia and will soon begin training several Georgian battalions to counter what defense officials believe is a growing terrorist threat in the country's mountainous Pankisi Gorge region, senior US officials said yesterday. The US is also considering sending as many as 200 Special Operations forces to the former Soviet republic of Georgia to help train that nation's military in counterterrorism tactics. The aim of the training mission, which is close to being approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is to prepare Georgian troops for combating foreign fighters who could have links to Al Qaeda. The impending deployment to Georgia would open a new front in the US war on terrorism, building on the current operations in Afghanistan and in the Philippines. [These two articles also appeared in the US State Department's Early Bird Report for February 27, 2002.]

3. Japan Domestic Politics

Agence France-Presse ("SUPPORT FOR JAPAN PM FALLS TO 53 PERCENT: POLL," 02/26/02) reported that public support for Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's cabinet has fallen to 53 percent as voters began to question his commitment to reform, a poll showed. The nationwide survey by the Yomiuri Shimbun said that the approval rate was down 25 points from the its January survey, when the cabinet enjoyed 78 percent support. The disapproval rate, meanwhile, jumped 22 points to 36 percent, the Yomiuri said. After Koizumi fired foreign minister Makiko Tanaka late last month, poll after poll has shown his cabinet's backing from the public at large has plummeted.

4. Taiwan-US Submarine Deal

The China Post (Chris Cockel, "TAIWAN'S SUBMARINE BID FACES OPPOSITION FROM U.S. NAVY," Washington, 02/23/02) reported that Taiwan's bid to acquire eight diesel-powered submarines may have run up against another roadblock: the US Navy. The US Navy is expressing opposition to the deal, fearing that should the US build the submarines for Taiwan, future construction of nuclear submarines may prove more difficult. Four very quiet diesel submarines can be constructed for the price of one Virginia-class submarine, a fact that is making the Navy "very very nervous" the report quotes a source close to the Pentagon as saying. Should the US Navy eventually build the submarines Congress may be less willing to approve funding for further nuclear-powered submarines.

5. PRC-US Weapons Proliferation

The New York Times (Erik Eckholm, "CHINA SAYS NEXT MOVE IN ARMS TALKS IS UP TO U.S.," Beijing, 02/27/02) reported that an unnamed senior PRC foreign policy official expressed that the US should take the next step to resolve the dispute over PRC exports of missile technology. The official addressed the US and stated, "We think the ball is in your court." However, the official declined to specify what the PRC expected the US to do before the PRC followed through with promises it made in November 2000 to issue detailed regulations on sensitive exports. In an effort to end the deadlock, the PRC's top arms control negotiator will travel to Washington in March for talks, the official said today.

6. Doomsday Clock

The Associated Press (F.N. D'Alessio, "DOOMSDAY CLOCK MOVED CLOSER," Chicago, 02/27/02) and Reuters ("HANDS OF 'DOOMSDAY CLOCK' RESET TOWARD DANGER," Chicago, 02/27/02) reported that the hands of the Doomsday Clock, for 55 years a symbol of nuclear danger, were moved two minutes closer to midnight on Wednesday, reflecting the possibility of terrorism, relations between India and Pakistan, and other global threats. The symbolic clock, kept by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, had been set at 11:51 since 1998. It was moved to 11:53 p.m. George A. Lopez, the publication's chairman of the board, said it has never been moved in response to a single event. Still, he said, the attacks of September 11 combined with evidence that terrorists were attempting to obtain the materials for a crude nuclear weapon should have served as a wake-up call to the world. He said the world has focused on short-term security rather than solving long-term problems. "The international community simply hit the snooze button rather than raising the general alarm," Lopez said. Stephen Schwartz, publisher of the Bulletin, said that originally the board defined "midnight" as nuclear war. In recent years, however, it has been redefined as the use of nuclear weapons anywhere on earth, he said.

7. Japan-ROK View of US-DPRK Relations

The Washington Post (Doug Struck, "TOKYO, SEOUL PLAY DOWN BUSH REBUKE OF N. KOREA," Tokyo, 02/27/02) reported that Japan and the ROK are trying to minimize the rift that they see left behind by US President George W. Bush's harsh rhetoric toward the DPRK during his trip to Asia last week. The DPRK has reacted angrily to Bush's statements, calling the US president the "kingpin of terrorism" and describing his trip a "war junket." Officials in Japan and the ROK have seized upon the invitation repeated by Bush to hold talks with the DPRK as evidence that the US administration is less antagonistic toward the DPRK than the president's words suggest. However, ROK President Kim Dae Jung acknowledged Monday that Bush's stance had increased tensions to a "critical" point. Critics of Bush say he has ensured there will be little progress by personally criticizing Kim Jong Il, an affront to a country that has little except its swollen pride. [This article also appeared in the US State Department's Early Bird Report for February 27, 2002.]

8. ROK-DPRK New Year Celebration

The Associated Press (Yoo Jae-suk, "NKOREA WITHDRAWS FROM NEW YEAR FEST," Seoul, 02/27/02) reported that the DPRK withdrew Wednesday from joint lunar New Year festivities with ROK civic and religious leaders, accusing the ROK of being "servants" of the US after it banned some of its citizens from attending. About 250 ROK activists and journalists arrived Tuesday at the DPRK's Mount Kumgang resort for the three-day festival-- without 46 activists banned by the the ROK. The DPRK accused the US of disrupting the rare joint event, "The meeting could not be held entirely because of US premeditated obstructive moves," said a statement carried by the Korean Central News Agency.

9. Korean American Leaders' View of Bush

PRNewswire (Rochester, Michigan, 02/22/02) reported that a group of Korean-American leaders criticized US President George W. Bush in an open letter to the White House asking for reconsideration of his policy of lumping Iraq, Iran and the DPRK as an "axis of evil." Supporting ROK President Kim Dae Jung's "sunshine policy," the leaders endorsed five steps that would contribute in moving the DPRK "out of its isolation and take its rightful place among nations." The recommended

steps are: supporting the present detente between the ROK and the DPRK, turning down the anti-DPRK rhetoric, lifting the embargo and dropping economic sanctions, coaxing change by treating the DPRK with respect and providing assistance, and establishing a US Liaison Office in Pyongyang without delay.

The full text of the letter can be found here:

http://www.prnewswire.com/cgi- bin/stories.pl?ACCT=104&STORY=/www/story/02-2--2002/0001674375&EDATE=

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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