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I. United States

1. DPRK Military Spending

BBC, ("N KOREA BOOSTS DEFENCE BUDGET," Pyongyang, 3/27/03) and Agence Presse-France ("NORTH KOREA BOOSTS MILITARY SPENDING AS NUCLEAR CRISIS PERSISTS," Seoul, 3/27/03) reported the DPRK has set aside a greater chunk of its limited resources to beef up its military while a nuclear crisis escalates, and announced a rare sale of government bonds to fill empty state coffers. The DPRK parliament, at its annual session Wednesday, allocated 15.4 percent of this year's budgeted expenditure to defense, up from 14.9 percent last year. Finance Minister Mun Il-Bong said the increase was needed to develop the DPRK's defence industry and train troops "as an invincible army and thus consolidate the country's defences as an impregnable fortress." Top priority will be given to the production of "quality raw and other materials" needed for boosting military power and

also putting "all the people under arms and turning the whole country into a fortress," he said in a report to the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA). The DPRK boosted its overall budgetary expenditure this year by 14.4 percent, requiring the sale of state bonds for the first time since the 1950-53 Korean War, said the official KCNA. "The budgetary revenue envisages taking a step for issuing bonds for the people's life with a view to making an effective use of money to spare," Moon said. ROK Unification Minister Jeong-Se-Hyun said the bond issue highlights the DPRK's economic woes aggravated by a five-month-old nuclear standoff with the United States. "The bond issue proves their situation is worse than before," he said.

2. DPRK-US Relations

CNN ("N. KOREA MAY BE EASING STAND," Pyongyang, 3/27/03) reported that the DPRK may be softening its stance on talks over its revived nuclear ambitions despite renewed threats to quit the 1953 armistice which ended the Korean war. US Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly said on Wednesday there were signs that the DPRK might be easing its insistence that its nuclear programs can only be addressed in direct US-North Korean talks, Reuters reports. "We have detected indications (there is) possibly some softening of that," Kelly, the State Department's point man for east Asian and Pacific affairs, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee without elaborating. Kelly stated after the hearing the possible easing in the DPRK's position was suggested in part by a press report and he said it might amount to nothing. The DPRK on Wednesday launched another blistering attack on the United States saying it might have "no option" but to stop honoring its commitments to the 1953 Korean War armistice because of US "persistent war moves" in and around the Korean Peninsula. A statement issued by the KCNA called ongoing joint military exercises between the US and ROK a "grave situation" and hit out at a US military build-up in the region. "The [Korean People's Army] side has exercised its utmost patience and restraint, repeatedly urging the US forces side to stop the arms buildup and large-scale military exercises, threats to the DPRK," the statement said.

3. US-DPRK Multilateral Resolution?

Reuters (Daniel Cooney, "POWELL: US WORKING WITH NORTH KOREA'S NEIGHBORS TO FIND PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO CRISIS," Washington, 3/27/03) reported that the US is working with the DPRK's neighbors to find a permanent and peaceful solution to the nuclear standoff on the Korean Peninsula, US Secretary of State Colin Powell said. Powell's comments in Washington came as the ROK's foreign minister said Thursday that a multilateral plan to solve the dispute over the DPRK's suspected nuclear weapons program could be finalized by May, ahead of a US-ROK summit. On Wednesday, the DPRK cut its only regular military contact with the US-led U.N. Command, which monitors the ongoing armistice that halted the Korean War 50 years ago. The move further isolated the DPRK. The U.N. Command said Thursday that the suspension of talks was "unfortunate." Powell said there was "a solution set" to the nuclear standoff and that the US was "working with all of our partners in the region to do this in a multilateral basis and solve this once and for all."

4. US-ROK on DPRK and Iraq

Associated Press ("US PACIFIC COMMANDER VISITS SOUTH KOREA TO DISCUSS NORTH KOREA AND IRAQ," Seoul, 3/27/03) reported that the commander of US forces in the Pacific arrived in the ROK on Thursday to discuss the DPRK nuclear standoff and the US-led war in Iraq, the ROK's military said. Adm. Thomas Fargo is scheduled to meet Friday with President Roh Moo-hyun, Defense Minister Cho Young-kil and Lee Nam-shin, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Fargo plans

to brief officials here about the war in Iraq, Lee's office said in a news release. Lee will urge Fargo to work with the ROK to prevent further escalation of tension over the DPRK's nuclear weapons programs, it said. Fargo was expected to inspect a joint US-ROK military exercise before leaving Saturday. Tensions on the Korean Peninsula have been high since October when US officials said the DPRK admitted having a secret nuclear program in violation of a 1994 pact.

5. United Nations Command on DPRK Withdrawal

Agence Presse-France ("UNC EXPRESSES REGRET AT NORTH KOREA'S WITHDRAWAL FROM ARMISTICE MEETING," Seoul, 3/27/03) reported that the US-led United Nations Command (UNC) has said that the DPRK's withdrawal from armistice talks was "unfortunate," noting the two sides had agreed dialogue was the best way to reduce tensions. The UNC said it was notified by the DPRK that its Korean People's Army (KPA) would not attend the weekly staff officer meetings at Panmunjom on the border. "KPA support for dialogue in Panmunjom has fluctuated over the years. The DPRK's decision to back away from dialogue at this time is unfortunate," the UNC said in a statement. It noted that during the General Officer Talks in August last year, both sides agreed that face-to-face discussions were the best way to reduce tensions and prevent misunderstandings.

6. Japan Spy Satellite Launch

Associated Press (Eric Talmadge, "SECURITY TIGHT ON EVE OF JAPAN'S FIRST SPY SATELLITE LAUNCH," Tanegashima, 3/27/03) reported that a glistening black-and-orange rocket carrying Japan's first spy satellites was moved to its launch pad for a final countdown on this remote island Thursday, as riot police sealed off the area and helicopters patrolled the skies. The project comes with intense political sensitivities. Neighboring DPRK has called the satellites a "grave threat" and preparations for the launch, scheduled for early Friday, have been conducted under unprecedented security. With choppers overhead and Coast Guard ships offshore, hundreds of riot police have set up road blocks three kilometers (two miles) from the launch pad at the Tanegashima Space Center, Japan's primary space launch center. Officials here have refused to give details about the satellites, and have tried to play down concerns over the DPRK's threat that it may retaliate by testing a long-range missile. "This is certainly a different kind of satellite from what we are used to," Shoshin Sonoda, the chief planner for the program, said in a pre-launch briefing. Sonoda said the main concern was the weather. But Sonoda said plans to launch the two satellites were progressing smoothly and the weather was expected to clear. With the initial go-ahead issued late Thursday, the 57-meter (170-foot) tall H2-A rocket was hauled from its assembly complex onto the launch pad where it was to boost the two satellites into orbit at 10:27 a.m. Friday (0127 GMT).

7. Japan Missile Defense

Associated Press ("DEFENSE CHIEF: JAPAN SHOULD LOOK TO TIGHTEN MISSILE DEFENSE," Tokyo, 3/27/03) reported that amid heightened concerns over the DPRK's nuclear weapons program, Japan's defense chief urged the government Thursday to consider new steps to tighten the nation's missile defenses. Tokyo has been exploring ways to strengthen its missile defenses since the DPRK test-fired a long-range ballistic missile over Japan in 1998. Japan's anti-missile arsenal includes 27 US-made short-range Patriot rockets deployed at locations around the country. Japanese media have reported that the government is planning to acquire a longer-range version, the Patriot PAC2, which has a range of 1,000 kilometers (620 miles). "We need to look at this from various angles," Defense Agency Director-General Shigeru Ishiba told lawmakers. "If we let debate come to a standstill we won't be fulfilling our responsibilities." Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi later said Japan ould stick

to its policy of never attacking another country, brushing aside speculation that Tokyo would consider launching a pre-emptive strike to prevent a DPRK missile launch. "America has said it considers an attack on Japan to be an attack on itself, and it is serving as a deterrent," Koizumi said. "An exclusively defensive posture thus suits Japan and this will not change."

8. Russia Ballistic Missile Test

Agence Presse-France ("RUSSIA SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCHES TEST ICBM," Moscow, 3/27/03) reported and Associated Press ("RUSSIA TEST-FIRES BALLISTIC MISSILE IN TRAINING EXERCISE," Moscow, 3/27/03) reported that Russia's Space Forces and Strategic Rocket Forces successfully test-fired a Topol intercontinental ballistic missile on Thursday during a training exercise at the northern Plesetsk cosmodrome, the rocket forces' press service said. The rocket forces' and Defense Ministry press service refused to identify the target for the RS-12M missile, which blasted off during a command staff exercise. Test-launched missiles are usually directed to the Kamchatka Peninsula in the Russian Far East, and the Interfax news agency reported that the missile had landed at the Kura proving ground there on target. A Defense Ministry duty officer said that the missile was 18 years old. The missile was launched from a self-propelled truck mount, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported.

9. Russia on Iraq Humanitarian Responsibility

Associated Press, (Eric Engleman, "RUSSIA: US-LED FORCES SHOULD TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR IRAQ'S HUMANITARIAN NEEDS," Moscow, 3/27/03) reported a top Russian diplomat said US and British forces should take responsibility for any humanitarian crisis that arises in Iraq. "The occupying forces are obliged to take care of the civilian population that finds itself under their control," Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Fedotov said in an interview published Thursday in the Vremya Novostei daily. "It is a military, forcible occupation, and it entails several obligations under international law and the Geneva Convention." Fedotov said Russia remained committed to the United Nations -sponsored oil-for-food program but said the war had held up deliveries of humanitarian aid, including Russian cargo ships docked in Syria. "At America's demand, customs inspectors handling humanitarian cargo have been withdrawn from Iraq and neighboring countries," Fedotov said. "Cargo is currently coming in, but there is no one to handle it." The oil-for-food program, launched in 1996 to help Iraqi civilians cope with sanctions, allowed Iraq to sell unlimited quantities of oil provided the money went mainly to buy food, medicine and other humanitarian goods. The proceeds from oil sales were deposited in a U.N.-controlled escrow account. Russia does not want the United States to control the U.N. account and says the United States and Britain should bear a significant share of aid costs. Russia is also concerned that Russian companies, which took an active role in the oil-for-food program and signed numerous contracts to develop Iraq's oil industry, will be pushed out by American companies in the aftermath of the US-led war.

10. ROK Public on US-Led War on Iraq

BBC (Caroline Gluck, "SOUTH KOREA DIVIDED BY WAR EFFORT," Seoul, 3/27/03) reported the ROK is among the small group of countries that has given its support to the US action in Iraq. Seoul has seen daily protests since the war started On Tuesday, parliament will debate sending a non-combat engineering unit of around 600 soldiers to Iraq. But the decision has split public opinion here. While conservative groups support the move, there have been daily anti-war protests. And many fear the implications of a US victory against Iraq in future dealings with neighboring DPRK - also labelled part of an axis of evil by US President, George W Bush. Anti-war demonstrations were

already taking place on a daily basis well before the US took military action against Iraq. Song Young-gil, South Korean legislator One woman at an anti-war demonstration in Seoul said she was strongly opposed to the move. "We are opposed to war and we don't want war to be happening in Iraq," she said. However another man recognized that his government was tied to its security obligations. "We understand that the situation around Korea is not that stable and... under the treaty that Korea and America have... we are tied." That view is echoed by many ordinary South Koreans. "South Korea didn't want to send troops, but it had no other choice," another man told me.

11. EU-DPRK UN Human Rights Body

Reuters (Stephanie Nebehay, "EU SET TO BRING NORTH KOREA BEFORE UN RIGHTS BODY," Geneva, 03/27/03) reported that the European Union plans to bring the DPRK before the U.N.'s top human rights body for major abuses, including killings and torture, in the first such move against the DPRK, diplomatic sources said on Thursday. The US has indicated it will be a "co-sponsor" of the resolution, expected to be presented in the next day or two to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, they added. The 53-member state forum is holding its annual six-week session to examine violations worldwide through April 25. "The EU text expresses deep concerns on torture, harsh and degrading treatment, public executions and capital punishment for political motives...," a diplomatic stated. "It is unbelievable, but it is the first time," he added. German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, in a speech to the commission on Tuesday, expressed "great concern" at "continuous reports of serious human rights violations in North Korea." "The local population is deprived of crucial basic rights. At the same time, the people are suffering great hardship due to disastrous humanitarian conditions," Fischer said. But the ROK's foreign minister Yoon Young-Kwan, in an interview with Reuters in Seoul the same day, questioned whether a resolution would be effective.

12. US on Japan Peace Keeping Troops in Iraq

Associated Press (Mari Yamaguchi, "AMBASSADOR: US WON'T ASK JAPAN TO SEND PEACEKEEPING TROOPS TO POSTWAR IRAQ," Tokyo, 3/27/03) reported that the US won't ask Japan to send peacekeeping troops to postwar Iraq, because the politically risky decision must be left to Tokyo alone, US Ambassador Howard Baker said Thursday. "I would not anticipate Japan's Defense Forces would be actively involved in the reconstruction," US Ambassador Howard Baker told Japanese public TV station NHK. Although he expressed hopes that Japan would join postwar reconstruction of Iraq, Baker said Washington wouldn't ask for such help. "I'm confident that we'll make no such request, but how Japan decides to approach the business of post-conflict resolution is very much Japan's decision," he said. Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has so far committed only humanitarian aid and participation in Iraq's reconstruction.

13. PRC Response to SARS

Associated Press, ("Dirk Beveridge, "CHINA'S SARS CASES RAISE OUTBREAK FEARS," Hong Kong, 3/27/03) reported that the PRC's disclosure of a sharply higher death toll from a mystery disease raised fears of a wider outbreak Thursday, and Hong Kong researchers said they have found an easily transmitted virus they believe is the primary cause of the illness. The deadly disease's impact was being felt across Asia. Singapore shut all its schools, Hong Kong mulled an emergency quarantine and the Rolling Stones postponed weekend concerts. The illness, severe acute respiratory system, or SARS, has now infected more than 1,300 people in more than a dozen countries and is blamed for at least 53 deaths, most of them in Asia. Thousands of Hong Kong

residents wore surgical masks while going about town, giving this vibrant city the feel of a sprawling hospital ward, although the Health Department recommended masks only for people with flu-like symptoms so they won't infect others. "If people feel more safe wearing a mask, it is up to them to decide," Health Department spokeswoman Sally Kong said. The Taiwanese capital of Taipei declared a full medical alert Thursday after a major engineering company temporarily closed because five of its employees were suspected of being infected. They had recently traveled to mainland PRC. "We suspect they caught the illness on the plane," said Health Department spokesman Liu Ming-hsun. Researchers at Hong Kong University said Thursday that their latest tests have identified a new virus from the Coronavirus family, which causes common colds, as the primary cause of SARS. But they said it might combine with a virus from the paramyxovirus family, which includes measles, mumps and canine distemper, making the effects even worse. One of the researchers, microbiology professor Malik Peiris, said the virus can survive in open air for a few hours and during that time can be transmitted through such contact as handshakes or even to someone pressing an elevator button previously touched by a disease victim. However, the virus can easily be killed by alcohol, Peiris said.

Associated Press (Ted Anthony, "CHINA'S RESPONSE TO ILLNESS SAID LACKING," Beijing, 3/27/03) reported that from official announcements to coverage in state-controlled media to cooperation with other countries' health experts, government responses to the flu-like disease that struck southern China have been sluggish and at times nonexistent. What's more, some reporters at state-controlled newspapers say they have been instructed to do no independent reporting on the sickness and to toe the line of government announcements. "They want to focus on one point - that the disease has been brought under control well - and keep other details low profile to avoid public panic," said a reporter at Southern Daily, a newspaper in Guangdong province. It is there where the disease began and where authorities on Wednesday reported 31 deaths - nearly a month after the last death is said to have occurred. The reporter, contacted by telephone Thursday, wouldn't give his name. He said newspapers had been told to keep reports brief and off the front page. But occasionally, the government statements offer insight. "From the Chinese media, you can see that atypical pneumonia is not a very serious disease," Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan said at a briefing Thursday. "Spring is," he added, "a season of respiratory disease."

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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