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I. United States

1. US DPRK Nukes Estimate Report

Washington Post (Glenn Kessler, "N. KOREA NUCLEAR ESTIMATE TO RISE US REPORT TO SAY COUNTRY HAS AT LEAST 8 BOMBS," 04/28/04) reported that the US is preparing to significantly raise its estimate of the number of nuclear weapons held by the DPRK, from "possibly two" to at least eight, according to US officials involved in the preparation of the report. The report, expected to be completed within a month, would reflect a new intelligence consensus on the DPRK's nuclear capabilities after that country's decision last year to restart a nuclear reactor and plutonium-reprocessing facility that had been frozen under a 1994 agreement. Among the evidence used in

making the assessment is a detailed analysis of plutonium byproducts found on clothing worn by members of an unofficial US delegation that was allowed to visit DPRK nuclear facilities several months ago. The increase in the estimate would underscore the strides the DPRK has made in the past year as the Bush administration struggled to respond diplomatically while waging a war against Iraq in an unsuccessful effort to search for such weapons there. Intelligence officials also have broadly concluded that a separate DPRK uranium-enrichment program will be operational by 2007, producing enough material for as many as six additional weapons a year, one US official said.

Washington Times ("WH: NO INFO ABOUT NORTH KOREA WEAPONS," Washington DC, 04/28/04) reported that the White House Wednesday denied any knowledge the government was preparing a report that would raise its estimate of the DPRK's nuclear weapons. Speaking with reporters at the White House, spokesman Scott McClellan said he had not heard of such a report. "I'm not aware of any new estimate," he said. However, he added the Bush administration has "serious and longstanding concerns about North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons" and urged the country to make progress on negotiations about disarmament. "The time is not limitless. We want to see progress," he said.

2. DPRK Railway Blast Economic Damage

The Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA: BLAST CAUSED $356M IN DAMAGE," Seoul, 04/27/04) reported that the DPRK's official news agency said Tuesday damage caused by last week's massive train explosion will come to about $356 million. Korean Central News Agency said homes were blown away, ceilings and building collapsed, "reducing everything to ruins" in the area within a half-mile of the explosion on Thursday. The explosion in Ryongchon left many people blind and deaf, KCNA said. The train explosion in Ryongchon killed at least 161 people and injured 1,300 others. "A preliminary estimate of the damage stands at about 48 billion won, or euro300 million," the agency reported. That comes to about $356 million. In a separate detailed report, the DPRK said it hoped reconstruction efforts would be complete within three months. A task force to be led by Vice Premier Ro Tu Chol will build 25 new public buildings and new houses for over 800 families, KCNA said. It will also renovate houses for 3,600 families.

3. ROK-DPRK Humanitarian Relief

Agence France-Presse ("FIRST ROK RELIEF SHIP LEAVES FOR NORTH KOREA," 04/28/04) reported that an ROK ship loaded with food and relief goods left here for the DPRK to help victims of last week's devastating train blast. The 1,534-tonne container ship, the Han Kwang, will reach the DPRK's western port of Nampo on Thursday through a direct sea route used for inter-Korean trade, Red Cross officials said. It was the first shipment of ROK aid for DPRKs hit by the train disaster that killed at least 150 people dead and left 1,300 injured in Ryongchon near the PRC border, according to DPRK government figures. Relief goods included instant noodles, mineral water, blankets, towels and clothes. The ship sailed out of port under a banner which said: "Emergency shipment of relief goods for the Ryongchon disaster." The decision to ship the goods followed Tuesday's inter-Korean talks in which the DPRK rejected an offer from Seoul for swift aid overland through the tense border that would have brought early relief to blast victims. The DPRK has expressed gratitude for the relief shipment and has given the ROK a shopping list of different items it says it needs for reconstruction. The list included 500,000 tons of cement, 10 bulldozers, 1,000 ton of fuel oil, 1,000 tons of iron bars, 50 television sets and 10,000 tons of food as well as school things like blackboards or desks.

4. ROK Iraq Troop Dispatch

Agence France-Presse ("ROK FM REAFFIRMS IRAQ TROOP DISPATCH," 04/28/04) reported that ROK Foreign Minister Ban Ki-Moon reaffirmed the ROK's commitment to dispatching thousands of troops to Iraq despite growing dissent from a newly elected parliament. "The government maintains its policy to send troops as scheduled," Ban told a weekly briefing. The ROK has pledged to deploy more than 3,000 troops to either Sulaimaniyah or Irbil in the northern Kurdish autonomous regions near the Iran border, at the request of the US. Parliament approved the troop dispatch in February, limiting the mission to relief and rehabilitation work. But elections on April 15 polls produced a more liberal National Assembly run by the reformist Uri Party, which won a majority of 152 seats. The party officially supports the troop dispatch but dissidents may be tempted to side with the Democratic Labour Party, the third biggest party with 10 seats, which demands the repeal of the troop dispatch. The conservative Grand National Party, with 121 seats, backs the deployment.

5. US Missile Defense

Agence France-Presse ("MISSILE DEFENSE SYSTEM COULD BE PUT ON ALERT IN SEPTEMBER EVEN IF IT FAILS TESTS: GENERAL," Washington, 04/27/04) reported that the Pentagon could put a ground-based missile defense system on alert as early as September when the first interceptor missiles will be deployed in Alaska even if it fails two flight tests this summer, the general who heads the program said. Lieutenant General Ronald Kadish, director of the Missile Defense Agency, said no decision had been made on when to put the first interceptor missile on alert. "From a common sense standpoint, the earliest would come when we have at least one bullet in the chamber, one missile," Kadish told reporters here. The first five ground-based interceptor missiles will be in their silos at Fort Greely, Alaska by September, complete with hardware, software and communications, he said. Three or four more missiles will be added in December, and another 10 at both Greely and Vandenberg Air Force Base in California the following year if Congress funds the Pentagon's 9.2-billion dollar budget request, he said. Critics have charged that the system is being fielded without being sufficiently tested. The General Accounting Office, a congressional watchdog, said in a report this month that the system was "largely unproven" despite eight intercept flight tests. Two more flight tests -- only one of them an attempted intercept -- are slated to be held in a few months, Kadish said. Asked whether the system could be put on alert even if those tests fail, Kadish said, "it could." "When it goes on alert it could be a function of many different things, including the world situation at the time," he said. But he acknowledged that successful flight tests were "confidence builders" that showed that all the systems parts work together as designed. "If they both fail, we're got big problems that we're going to have to go figure out what to do about," he said.

6. PRC on US and UK Role in Hong Kong Democratization

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA TELLS BRITAIN AND US TO STAY OUT OF HONG KONG AFFAIRS," 04/28/04) reported that the PRC hit back at Britain and the US after they criticised the decision to rule out direct elections for Hong Kong in 2007, a move that has infuriated many people in the territory. Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing made clear that what the PRC does in Hong Kong is of no concern to Britain or the US, and they should refrain from getting involved. "Foreign countries should not interfere. The PRC doesn't allow and doesn't welcome and doesn't need foreign interference," Li told reporters. "Under British rule, Hong Kong had no democracy. Did Britain say anything? Did the US say anything? No! This is double standard." The foreign ministry, at a regular briefing, suggested that Britain and the US did not understand the "basic facts" about Hong Kong. Spokesman Kong Quan said it was evident that since Hong Kong's return to China from colonial power Britain in 1997, "Hong Kong people have been able to enjoy more extensive rights and freedoms". "

7. PRC SARS Development Agence France-Presse ("CHINA REPORTS NEW SUSPECTED SARS CASE," 04/28/04) reported that the PRC's health ministry reported a new suspected SARS case in Beijing, taking the total number of suspected cases around the country to seven. There are already two previously reported confirmed cases, one each in Beijing and eastern Anhui province. Of the total suspected cases, six are in Beijing and one in Anhui. The new suspected case is a 49-year-old woman, a retired doctor, listed as in critical condition, the ministry said on its website. It said she was initially treated on April 9 for chest problems at the Xuanwu hospital in a southwestern district of the PRC capital. Three days later, on April 12, she was transferred to Jiangong hospital where she shared a room with a nurse already identified as a suspected patient. The ministry said the retired doctor developed a fever on April 19 and was transferred to Ditan Hospital on April 22 where she was confirmed as a suspected Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) patient Tuesday afternoon.

8. US-PRC Labor Relations

Agence France-Presse ("BUSH MAY ACCEPT LANDMARK RIGHTS PETITION AGAINST CHINA: EXPERTS," 04/28/04) reported that facing a Friday deadline, US President George W. Bush may accept a petition to study possible sanctions against the PRC for alleged violation of labor rights, business and trade experts say. The petition by the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organisation (AFL-CIO), the biggest US trade union movement, is backed by Bush's presumptive election rival, Democratic Senator John Kerry. It charges that violation of workers' rights artificially reduces wages and production costs in the PRC and, as a result, has displaced hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs across America and contributed to a whopping 124 billion dollar US trade deficit with the PRC. "In a political season, they would do things that they would otherwise wouldn't do, so it is possible that they would accept the petition and say they are going to investigate," said Gary Hufbauer, a trade expert at the Institute for International Economics. To buy time, he said, the Bush administration could launch a lengthy study on the issue until after the November 2 US presidential election before taking any further action on the petition. The AFL-CIO filed the unprecedented action under the powerful section 301 of the Trade Act, seeking to end what it called the PRC government's repression of factory workers' human rights. It marks the first time a petition has been brought under the act claiming violation of workers' rights as an unfair trade practice. Corporations and the government had used section 301 in the past to challenge unfair trade practices, like copyright protection. The petition was filed on March 16 and Bush has 45 days from that date to decide whether to accept it and launch an investigation.

II. Japan

1. Opinion Poll on Yasukuni

The Asahi Shimbun ("PUBLIC SPLIT ON SHRINE PILGRIMAGE," 04/21/04) reported that Japanese voters are almost evenly split over Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni Shrine, which honors the nation's war dead, including Class-A war criminals, an Asahi Shimbun survey showed. Thirty-nine percent of the 1,964 voters polled opposed Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni Shrine. Still, 42 percent favored the pilgrimages, according to the survey. Those in their 40s and 50s tended to oppose the visits, while younger and older generations tended to approve of them. Of the respondents in their 40s, 32 percent supported the visits, while 45 percent said Koizumi should stop. However, of those aged 70 and older, 52 percent said the visits were good, while 36 percent objected. Forty-six percent of those in their 20s were in favor of the visits while 36 percent were against them. In particular, 55 percent of men in their 20s supported the Yasukuni visits. Opinions

also were politically aligned. The majority of Liberal Democratic Party supporters -- 59 percent -- approved the visits. But most who support opposition parties did not. Fifty-four percent of supporters for the Democratic Party of Japan, 55 percent of backers of the Japanese Communist Party and 59 percent of supporters for the Social Democratic Party opposed the trips to the shrine.

2. Japan New Defense Panel

The Asahi Shimbun ("SHIFTING GEARS: DEFENSE PANEL ADDS TO KOIZUMI'S CLOUT, 04/22/04) reported that a new defense panel, set up with the aim of strengthening the influence of the Japanese prime minister's office on long-term defense policy, will hold its first meeting on April 27. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda formally introduced the panel, which will advise Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and work out a new National Defense Program Outline. "Security and defense are not issues that should be determined solely by the Defense Agency," Fukuda told a news conference. "There are diplomatic judgments to be made and financial problems to be considered." The 10-member panel, led by Hiroshi Araki, adviser to Tokyo Electric Power Co., will discuss long-term defense and security arrangements to counter new threats such as terrorism and ballistic missiles. The panel will present recommendations this fall for the new outline, due out by the end of the year. Toyota Motor Corp. President Fujio Cho will also join the panel, representing the business sector. The other members are: Makoto Iokibe, professor at Kobe University; Ken Sato, former administrative vice defense minister; Akihiko Tanaka, professor at the University of Tokyo; Tetsuya Nishimoto, former chairman of the Joint Staff Council; Yumi Hiwatari, professor at Sophia University; Teijiro Furukawa, former deputy chief Cabinet secretary; Shunji Yanai, former ambassador to the US; and Masakazu Yamazaki, president of the University of East Asia.

3. Japan-US Missile Defense Cooperation

The Asahi Shimbun ("U.S. WANTS RADAR SYSTEM IN JAPAN," 04/22/04) reported that the US officials have sent out signals that the US government wants to set up an early-warning radar system in Japan to detect intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) aimed at the US, Japanese government sources said. But accepting such a radar system could overstep the boundaries of the Japan-US Security Treaty. The treaty states that Japan can house military-related facilities of the US only for "the defense of Japan and maintenance of peace and stability in the Far East." The planned missile defense system is designed to protect Japan. But the radar system would in effect be solely for the defense of the US. The US has already asked Britain and Denmark to house similar early-warning radar systems. Japanese government sources said the US has inquired about the possibility of deploying the Ground-Based Radar (GBR) system capable of not only detecting and tracing ICBMs heading for the US, but also guiding intercepting missiles. Defense Agency officials will ask the US to provide more details about the capabilities of the GBR system before considering the merits of its deployment and whether it would be compatible with a radar system that Japan is already planning, sources said. Six ground-based FPS-3 radar systems will be upgraded and four units of the Japanese warning and control radar system will be deployed from fiscal 2008. Japan's planned radar system would double the existing detection distance for incoming missiles.

4. PRC on Six-Nation Talks

The Asahi Shimbun (Taro Karasaki, "CHINA DIPLOMAT: TALKS MUST BE CONCILIATORY," 04/22/04) reported that the PRC ambassador to Japan on Wednesday brushed aside criticism that the PRC government is stalling six-nation talks by not doing enough to persuade the DPRK to dismantle its nuclear-development program. Ambassador Wu Dawei said that although resolving the

DPRK nuclear issue involves bargaining by all participating nations, the six-nation talks were slowly gaining ground. "The six-way talks must address the concerns from all parties," Wu said in a lecture at the Tokyo-based Asian Affairs Research Council. "If we are trying to resolve the concerns of only one party, then there would be no need for the talks." Wu was responding to an assertion by Roger W. Robinson, chairman of US-China Economic and Security Review Commission of the US Congress. Robinson earlier this month said that considering the fact that the PRC continues to provide energy and food assistance to the DPRK, it is not wielding enough of its influence to urge the country to abandon its nuclear ambitions.

5. Japan-DPRK Bilateral Talks

Mainichi Daily News ("N. KOREA WARNS JAPAN NOT TO HARP ON ABDUCTION ISSUE," Pyongyang, 04/22/04) reported that the DPRK's top negotiator with Japan on Thursday warned that his country would not resume bilateral talks if Japanese govenment continues to push the abduction issue. Jong Thae Hwa, a top negotiator with Japan, said in an interview with the Mainichi and other Japanese media organizations, "We won't accept bilateral talks if they are only on the abduction issue." During the interview, Jong repeated the DPRK's stance on the abduction issue, saying that it was already settled when Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi talked with the DPRK leader Kim Jong Il in September 2002. He said that after the DPRK government allowed five abductees to return temporarily to Japan in 2002, Japan utilized them for an anti-North Korea campaign. Japan has to return the five to the DPRK, he said. As for a suspected nuclear development program, Jong said it was a topic for the DPRK to talk about with the US, not with Japan.

6. Japan on Iraqi Reconstruction

Mainichi Daily News ("JAPAN TO MEDIATE G-8 DISCUSSION ON UN EFFORTS IN IRAQ, 04/22/04) reported that Japan plans to mediate a discussion between France, Germany, Russia and the US at the upcoming G-8 summit on the UN-led reconstruction of Iraq, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said Thursday. "It will be a good opportunity for us to recognize the UN role in the reconstruction of Iraq," said Koizumi, "France, Germany and Russia hope to create an environment where they can also take part (in the reconstruction of Iraq). Japan wants to support their enthusiasm." Koizumi added that Japan has been telling the US to seek a larger UN role in the reconstruction, and for more countries to play a role in the Iraqi interim government as mapped out by Lakhdar Brahimi, the UN special envoy to Iraq. Koizumi also added that it was important for the US to play a central role to ensure security in the area. "There will be no peace in the Middle East without US efforts," Koizumi said. As for the role of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF), Koizumi said Japan would maintain its troops in Iraq even after governing power was taken over by an Iraqi interim government, scheduled to take place at the end of June. But he made a point of saying that the SDF would limit its role to non-military, humanitarian projects. "Japan cannot take part in activities to keep security and order there. We are doing humanitarian, reconstruction efforts," he said.

7. Kyrgyz Premier on Japan's Aid to Afghanistan

The Japan Times ("AKAYEV LAUDS JAPAN'S AFGHAN AID," 04/22/04) reported that Kyrgyzstan President Askar Akayev voiced appreciation Wednesday for Japan's support on the reconstruction of Afghanistan, stating that stability in the country is key to peace in Central Asia, a Japanese official said. Akayev was quoted as saying in a meeting with Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi that Afghanistan had been a threat to other Central Asian countries. Akayev told Koizumi that all countries in the region appreciate Japan's efforts, such as hosting an international donors' meeting

for Afghanistan in Tokyo in January 2002.

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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