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I. United States

1. US-DPRK Multilateral Talks

Agence France-Presse ("US OFFICIAL HEADS TO ASIA FOR NORTH KOREA TALKS," 01/29/04) reported that the US State Department's top East Asia hand James Kelly left for the region, in the latest stage of a grueling six-nation diplomatic bid to end the DPRK nuclear crisis. Kelly flew first to Thailand to take part in a US dialogue with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), before heading to Japan and South Korea for talks with top officials on the nuclear showdown, a State Department official said. After spending several days in Bangkok, Kelly was due in Seoul on February 1 and scheduled to move to Japan the next day, where he will link up with Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, who is already on a tour of the region. Armitage and Kelly were to take part in the US-Japan strategic dialogue and a three way discussion also involving Australia. US officials here said privately they have suggested a possible window for the talks between February 13 and 17, though the State Department said Wednesday that no firm date had yet been set.

2. DPRK-Nigeria Missile Deal

The Associated Press (Glenn McKenzie, "NIGERIA: N. KOREA ENTERING MISSILE DEAL," Lagos, 01/28/04) reported that the DPRK has agreed to share missile technology with Nigeria, the Nigerian government said Wednesday - a deal that would take the DPRK's missile business to sub-Saharan Africa. If the deal goes through, Nigeria would join Libya, Iran, Egypt, Pakistan and Syria among countries reported to have received the DPRK's help with either missiles or missile technology. Nigeria, which is not at war or under any known threat from other countries, said any missile help would be used for "peacekeeping" and to protect its territory. It said it was not seeking nuclear technology or weapons of mass destruction. A Nigerian official said no hardware acquisitions had yet been made or decided. The government did not say whether Nigeria, the continent's most populous nation and West Africa's military giant, would obtain missiles or simply receive help making them. Referring to the announcement - as well as press reports that Nigeria later turned down the offer - State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said: "Obviously, this issue of regional stability and military acquisition is something that we do care about, something that's a regular part of our dialogue with Nigeria." The DPRK was in Nigeria's capital, Abuja, on a bilateral visit from Tuesday to Saturday. The US alleges that Pyongyang reaped about $560 million from missile sales in 2001. The deal made public Wednesday takes the North Koreans well out of their normal selling base, the Mideast, Gottemoeller said. "What is surprising is that they're so far afield," she said. Nigeria would be the DPRK's first known sub-Saharan partner. Ojo initially said both sides were committed to the deal, but later stated that "nothing was written in stone."

3. PRC-France Relations

Agence France-Presse ("PRC LEADER'S VISIT TO FRANCE STIRS CONTROVERSY," 01/29/04) reported that PRC President Hu Jintao pushed on with a state visit to France by showing little reaction to the storm of controversy it has caused, notably among human rights advocates and in Taiwan. Hu spent Wednesday, the third day of his four-day visit, in meetings with French business leaders keen to use the sudden closeness between Paris and Beijing to get a piece of the PRC's booming economy. After one meeting, PRC Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing said: "There are going to be a lot of opportunities and projects for French companies in China." The night before Hu and his host, President Jacques Chirac, dined in a restaurant with their wives in a display of friendship and solicitude after signing a joint declaration in which they notably enshrined a desire to see human rights respected in the PRC and lashed Taiwan for a referendum seen as a first step towards independence. At a Tuesday media conference, Hu thanked Chirac for his backing against Taiwan and announced that a PRC airline had agreed in principle to buy 21 Airbus aircraft in a deal worth at least a billion euros (1.3 billion dollars). But Taiwanese officials erupted with fury at Chirac's depiction of the island state's March 20 referendum on ties with the PRC as "irresponsible" and "dangerous" for Asian stability. "It is shameful .... in order to get huge business contracts, Chirac even sacrificed the foundations of France and trampled the dignity of democracy," Taiwanese Vice-President Annette Lu said.

4. Japan Nuclear Fusion Project

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN CONFIDENT OF WINNING COLOSSAL NUCLEAR FUSION PROJECT," Tokyo, 01/28/04) reported that a Japanese site will accommodate the ITER experimental nuclear reactor project if its technological merits and the importance of locating such a major project in Asia are fairly assessed, the country's science minister said. "I have no doubt that the Japanese site will be chosen if a fair assessment is made from a scientific and technological viewpoint," said Takeo Kawamura, minister of education, culture, sports, science and technology. ITER, or the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor, aims to test technology for nuclear fusion, billed as the clean, safe, inexhaustible energy source of the future. The European Union, the

US, the PRC, Japan, the ROK, and Russia are to vote in late February on whether the French town of Cadarache or the northern Japanese village of Rokkasho-mura should host the 10-billion-dollar project. They failed to decide on the site at a meeting in December, with Japan drawing backing from the US and the ROK, while France won support from the PRC and Russia. While arguing "the odds are in favor of us", Kawamura said Japan and France could discuss the possibility of sharing the project by siting the actual reactor site in one country and an information center in the other. He said no detailed debate on compromise plans had taken place.

5. Japan Former Foreign Minister Death

The Associated Press ("FORMER JAPAN FOREIGN MINISTER IKEDA DIES," Tokyo, 01/27/04) reported that former Foreign Minister Yukihiko Ikeda, a longtime political figure who led his country's efforts to resolve the 1990s hostage crisis in Peru, died of cancer Wednesday, his party said. He was 66. Ikeda died at a Tokyo hospital, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party said in a statement. Ikeda was in his 10th term as a lawmaker. Ikeda was foreign minister from January 1996 to September 1997, and his term was marked by Peruvian rebels' take-over of the ambassador's mansion in Lima during a reception in December 1996. The rebels held 72 people, including Japanese diplomats and businessmen, captive for nearly four months. They were freed April 22, 1997, in a raid by Peruvian commandos. All 14 rebels, two commandos and one hostage died in the raid. Ikeda, the son-in-law of late Prime Minister Hayato Ikeda, also held key party posts and was a Defense Agency chief.

6. Asia Bird Flu Epidemic

Agence France-Presse ("ASIAN NATIONS FORGE UNITED FRONT AGAINST BIRD FLU AS OUTBREAK HITS CHINA," 01/29/04) reported that Asian nations agreed to join forces and step up their fight against the bird flu outbreak as it took an ominous foothold in the PRC and claimed two more lives in Vietnam. "Our individual efforts must be reinforced by effective regional and international cooperation in view of the magnitude of the challenge," Thai Foreign Minister Surakiart Sathirathai said after crisis talks here. Ministers and officials "pledged to do more" to combat the spread of the disease which has erupted in 10 Asian nations and triggered a mass cull of some 20 million chickens and other poultry. The deepening crisis sent shockwaves around the region's stock markets, with losses on bourses in Hong Kong, Singapore, Bangkok and Bombay blamed on fears the outbreak could spin out of control and harm Asian economies. The PRC said Wednesday it was battling three separate outbreaks of bird flu hundreds of miles (kilometres) apart, sparking fears the virus has already spread across the country. Some 14,000 ducks were culled at a farm in Guangxi province near Vietnam and all poultry within a five-mile radius was quarantined. In the central provinces of Henan and Hubei, officials said more than 2,000 chickens were culled.

7. Op-Ed: Lewis on DPRK Visit

Washington Post (John W. Lewis ("Hope on N. Korea," 01/27/04) carried an op-ed that read "Last August, just after my ninth visit to North Korea since 1987, the six-party talks on the Korean nuclear crisis ended in stalemate. In the days that followed, I began organizing a return trip by a group of people who had been studying the North's nuclear program and the tortuous path of US-DPRK relations. The January visit to Pyongyang fell into three principal areas: Foreign Ministry discussions, a visit to the Nuclear Scientific Research Center at Yongbyon, and extended meetings with officials dealing with a variety of economic, military, scientific, humanitarian and human rights questions. Obviously, what has attracted the most attention is our visit to Yongbyon, but that was

only one of the directions we took. The changes from 1987 to 2004 have been dramatic, and they continue. Along the roads and in the towns, small entrepreneurs are taking advantage of the new pricing and market policies. The real shocker was the massive semi-private market on Tong Il Street in Pyongyang, where potential buyers can find quantities of meat, vegetables and fruits as well as hardware, furniture and clothes. While life in the countryside remains stark, similar markets are said to be springing up in other cities, and ROK money is flowing in to build a huge industrial park just north of the Demilitarized Zone. A market economy, however limited, has arrived in the North. These changes are as important as they are dramatic.

They put the nuclear program in a new context. North Korea's desperately needed and desired economic policies depend on opening to the outside world and can succeed only if its nuclear weapons program is totally dismantled, which all parties to the six-party talks say is their goal. Last spring the nuclear program was the lead element in Pyongyang's "military-first" strategy, but now the program and the strategy are under pressure from economic priorities. The West's misperception of North Korea's economic state (stuck in the images of the mid-1990s famine) has skewed its ability to understand the complex motivations driving Pyongyang's leadership. Misinterpretations and language barriers may have also raised roadblocks to diplomacy.

At the Foreign Ministry, we discussed the contentious issue of North Korea's supposed admission on Oct. 4, 2002, to having a clandestine highly enriched uranium (HEU) program in violation of the letter and spirit of the 1994 Agreed Framework. There is a disagreement about whether North Korea actually admitted to having such a program at a meeting with US officials. The disagreement concerns a difference between what North Korea believes it said and what the US believes it heard. The issue is important because when it was claimed that the North had admitted to having an HEU program, diplomacy died for a year and North Korea advanced at full speed toward a nuclear arsenal. Once who said what about the enriched-uranium program has been clarified, we will still have to deal with the facts. As one delegation member said to the Koreans: "The key issue is the US has independent information that makes it believe the DPRK [North Korea] has an HEU program. In the US, there is the widespread view that the complete, verifiable resolution of this HEU issue is now mandatory. This is a practical issue, and there must be a multilateral discussion to resolve it." In response, the vice foreign minister said the North had chosen the plutonium path and had no facilities or scientists dedicated to an HEU program, adding that Pyongyang was open to technical talks on the issue -- a significant new development.

The main challenge now is to engage North Korea and deal with our mutual fears and threats. Neither war nor a nuclearized North Korea is an option. The diplomacy of nuclear disarmament in this age is starkly different from that of the Cold War. Mutual deterrence between vastly unequal states lacks stability and reasonable predictability. It does not exist. The opportunity for a diplomatic solution has grown in recent weeks. The DPRK Foreign Ministry said that if our visit helped "even a bit" to remove the ambiguities and misunderstandings of the crisis, it "would serve as a substantial foundation for a peaceful settlement." We fully recognize that this "bit" must be followed up with many more, but we believe such a settlement is no longer a vain hope.

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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