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I. United States

1. Multilateral Talks

Reuters ("NORTH KOREA TALKS SET FOR JUNE 23-26", 06/16/04) reported that the third round of six-party talks on the crisis over the DPRK's nuclear ambitions will be held in Beijing next week and the PRC said progress was set to be slow and urged all sides to work toward a resolution. The discussions would be preceded by two days of working level talks, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue told a news conference, confirming an earlier report by the official Xinhua news agency. "The Chinese side hopes the relevant parties concerned will build on already reached consensus and continue to discuss in depth relevant issues and to enhance mutual understanding so as to make headway," Zhang said. "The Korean peninsula's nuclear problem is very complicated. It's very difficult for any side to expect to resolve all the issues in one round or two rounds of talks," she said. "I think this is a relatively long process." PRC and Korean officials declined to comment on the potential outcome of the next round, saying it was too early to say whether the talks would produce any concrete agreement. "We're neither optimistic nor pessimistic. All we can say is that we will do our best to achieve the goal of resolving the nuclear issue early," Yoo Euy-sang, a senior official covering North Korea at the South Korean Foreign Ministry, told a news conference.

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2. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Reuters ("SOUTH KOREA SAYS NUCLEAR TALKS WILL NOT STALL", 06/16/04) reported that the ROK expects to see some progress at next week's multilateral talks on the DPRK's nuclear programs but a lack of results would not mean the process had lost momentum, the foreign minister said on Wednesday. The two Koreas, the United States, Japan, Russia and host the PRC will meet for four days beginning on June 23 in Beijing for a third round of the slow-moving negotiations in which simply agreeing to meet again has so far been greeted as a success. "We expect to see some visible progress and result at the third round of talks," Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon told a news conference. "But I don't think a lack thereof has to mean momentum would be lost, because this is an ongoing process that must be developed further with patience," he said. He said the ROK was prepared to offer what it took for the DPRK to become part of the international community, such as a security guarantee or economic aid. "But the problem is North Korea is not responding to this," he said. Despite a proposal by the ROK at the second round in February that energy assistance would begin as soon as the DPRK pledges to freeze then dismantle its nuclear programs, the DPRK has demanded the US first drop what it describes as a hostile policy. The DPRK would not allow the whole process to fall apart, said Lee Jung-hoon, an international affairs expert at Yonsei University. "North Korea is not dumb and knows that it's never going to be able to go it alone on this by alienating China and to a lesser degree Russia," Lee said.

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3. US on DPRK Nuclear Program

Financial Times ("US 'PLANS TO KEEP UP PRESSURE' ON PYONGYANG TO SCRAP NUCLEAR PROJECTS", 06/16/04) reported that the US intends to stick to its demand for the "complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement" of all the DPRK's nuclear programs when six-party talks resume in Beijing next week, a US official said, dismissing speculation of a change in the Bush administration's hardline position. Analysts in the US said neither side seemed serious about trying to break the impasse before the US presidential election in November. While still receiving considerable economic aid from its neighbors and the US, the DPRK sees cracks appearing among the US's allies and is holding out for a bilateral deal on better terms that might come with a new US president. For its part, the Bush administration is in no mood to make concessions in an election year. However, the US official, who asked not to be identified, acknowledged there was a policy debate within the administration. "There are some battles still going on," he said. But a decision had been made to stick to the demand for dismantlement. "Nothing will be expected from the forthcoming talks, should the United States continue to insist that North Korea dismantle its nuclear program in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner," the foreign ministry said. "It is a demand that can be forced on a defeated country only." Analysts said they did not expect DPRK to push the issue by taking its weapons program further with a nuclear or long-range missile test. Charles Pritchard, a former US envoy at the Brookings Institution, said he did not expect a breakthrough and described the talks as "almost an exercise in futility". The PRC had questioned the reliability of US intelligence on the DPRK's alleged uranium enrichment program and asked the US to produce evidence next week, he said. Donald Gregg, former US ambassador to the ROK, told a conference in Seoul: "The longer the US refuses to enter into negotiations, the higher the price becomes for (improved relations with Pyongyang), while the dangerous prospect of North Korea becoming a permanent nuclear power steadily increases."

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4. DPRK on US Weapons

Korean Central News Agency of DPRK ("U.S. STORAGE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS BLASTED", 06/16/04) reported that a spokesman for the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland issued a statement Monday with regard to the exposure of the possession of biochemical weapons by the U. S. forces in the ROK. The statement says: Toward the end of April marks indicating the storage of chemical weapons were found in a powder magazine of the guards belonging to the "U.N. Forces Command" controlling the demilitarized zone in Panmunjom. Attached to the powder magazine were three marks designated in the U.S. forces' regulations on explosive materials. The second mark among them demanded the wearing of overalls for protecting the whole body from toxic chemicals and the third one banned contact with water indicating that there were chemical weapons antipathetic to water. The weapons applicable to the yellow protective overalls are all weapons banned under the international convention signed by the U.S. and they are extremely dangerous weapons which were proclaimed to be banned by the U.S. forces themselves. It is none other than the United States which is developing, producing, deploying and proliferating the biggest amount of mass destruction weapons in the world while gravely threatening the destiny of humankind, brandishing them as main means of pursuing its policy of strength. The U. S. is the first target of denunciation in the matter of mass destruction weapons. All the Koreans in the north, the south and overseas bitterly denounce the United States for its storage of quite dangerous mass destruction weapons and its war preparations, branding this as moves to destroy the Korean nation and a prelude to a war of genocide threatening the existence of humankind.

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5. US - PRC on DPRK

Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA SEEN KEY TO U.S.-CHINA TIES", 06/16/04) reported that the most important test in U.S.-PRC relations in the coming months will involve whether the PRC can persuade the DPRK to dismantle its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs, a bipartisan commission reported. "Time is not on our side in this crisis," the commission's report said. "We believe China must step up to this crucial task and quickly." The congressionally mandated report by the U.S-China Economic and Security Review Commission said the PRC has helped bring the DPRK to the table but "has not adequately employed its considerable political and economic leverage over North Korea to drive Pyongyang toward acceptance of a complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear weapons programs." The PRC should also agree to curtail the DPRK's export of ballistic missiles, the report said, by providing alternative economic incentives for the North Koreans that would replace the hard currency they earn from these sales.

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6. ROK - US Relations

Associated Press ("S. KOREA TO TRY U.S. SOLDIER IN STABBING", 06/16/04) The ROK decided to retain jurisdiction over a U.S. soldier accused of stabbing a ROK man in a drunken brawl last month, the Justice Ministry said. The decision clears the way for ROK prosecutors to indict Pfc. John C. Humphrey on charges of attempted murder, South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported. Humphrey, who belongs to the 17th Aviation Brigade of the U.S. Eighth Army, allegedly stabbed a 27-year-old South Korean on May 15. A Justice Ministry official confirmed that the ROK will retain jurisdiction, but provided no further details. The U.S. military has been notified of South Korea's decision, said Lt. Col. Steven Boylan, a spokesman for the U.S. Eighth Army. "We will continue to cooperate with the South Korean authorities over this issue," Boylan said. The South Korean was allegedly stabbed while trying to stop the drunken soldier from stomping on a taxi, according to local news reports. Local police detained the soldier and later handed him over to U.S. military authorities. The victim was reportedly in a stable condition.

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7. ROK - DPRK Relations

Associated Press("NORTH KOREA SAYS KOREAS ARE 'ONE BLOOD'", 06/16/04) reported that with warm words for the ROK, DPRK loudspeakers blared a final propaganda message that reverberated across the demilitarized zone just before midnight: "We, from one blood and using one language, can no longer live separated." The last broadcast in decades of strident exchanges included harsh words for the US "the root cause of suffering and misfortune that our people are experiencing." The two Koreas agreed to halt the broadcasts beginning Tuesday, the fourth anniversary of a summit between their leaders. In its last message, the DPRK blamed the US for the longstanding conflict and issued an emotional appeal for reunification. "We, from one blood and using one language, can no longer live separated and we must put the earliest possible end to the tragedy of national division," the broadcast said. It was reported by Yonhap, the ROK's national news agency. "The imperialist United States is the root cause of suffering and misfortune that our people are experiencing," it said. "We should take a firm attitude to oppose the pro-U.S. traitorous forces and move forward in the direction of national cooperation." The broadcast ended with an emotional appeal: "Let's embrace each other, laughing and crying out of joy and emotion, on the day of national unification."

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8. IAEA in the DPRK

Agence France-Presse ("NORTH KOREA COULD ACCEPT IAEA INSPECTIONS IN SIX-PARTY TALKS: ANALYSTS", 06/16/04) reported that the DPRK could agree to inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) of its nuclear weapons program at six-party talks next week, if the US agrees to compensation in return, analysts said. "During the talks there will be a possibility of some movement, but there is not a big chance that there will be a breakthrough," said Cui Yingjiu, a leading DPRK expert at Peking University. "If the United States can agree or can accept that some fuel oil or other aid can be given by other parties, in exchange for North Korea announcing a freeze on its nuclear weapons program and its acceptance of IAEA inspections, then this would be a step forward. Cui was speaking after a US official in Washington Tuesday said that the US would not oppose aid concessions to the DPRK in exchange for a pledge from the DPRK to freeze its nuclear weapons program. "We're not against a freeze and we're not against people saying if they freeze on the way to dismantlement they might even do something for the North Koreans," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. "But it has to be clear that any freeze is a step toward elimination of nuclear programs," he said.

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9. IAEA Japan Inspections

Asahi Shimbun ("IAEA TO CUT JAPAN NUCLEAR INSPECTIONS", 06/16/04) reported that since Japan's nuclear facilities are being used only for peaceful purposes, the International Atomic Energy Agency announced Monday it will halve the number of annual inspections of those sites. The reduction will allow the IAEA, which suffers from a chronic shortage of funds and inspectors, to free up resources for inspections in Iran and other countries suspected of running nuclear arms development programs. Currently, the cost of inspecting Japan's facilities accounts for about 10 percent of the watchdog's entire inspections budget. Japan's nuclear power plants currently undergo five inspections a year on average. The agency's decision, which is based on its conclusion that Japan has no intention of developing nuclear weapons, follows four years of inspections of Japanese facilities. In 1999, Japan ratified an IAEA protocol on strengthening safeguards. In Tokyo, science and technology minister Takeo Kawamura issued a statement Monday renewing Japan's pledge to contribute to strengthening the pursuit of nuclear nonproliferation around the world and the peaceful use of nuclear power.

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10. Japan on DPRK Nuclear Program

Kyodo News Service ("JAPAN TO URGE NORTH KOREA TO ACT ON LEADER'S NUCLEAR ISSUE REMARKS", 2004-06-16) reported that Japan plans to urge the DPRKto make good on recent remarks by its leader Kim Jong-il on settling the nuclear issue during next week's six-nation talks on the subject, a senior Japanese Foreign Ministry official said Tuesday (15 June).Kim told Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi in their 22 May talks in Pyongyang that the DPRK is willing to freeze its nuclear weapons program to achieve the goal of a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula and allow inspections. The remarks by the Japanese official follows the PRC's announcement Tuesday that the third round of six-nation talks on the dispute over the DPRK's nuclear development program will be held between 23 and 26 June in Beijing, preceded by a working group meeting on 21 and 22 June to prepare for the higher-level gathering. Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi said Tuesday she

strongly hoped that the DPRK will reflect (the commitment made by Kim) in their words and actions in the upcoming six-party talks. "I hope the talks will make progress towards a peaceful solution," she said. On the issue of the DPRK's abduction of Japanese nationals, Japan is unlikely to raise the matter in detail in the upcoming multilateral sessions, Kawaguchi said in a news conference Tuesday. Japan may raise the issue at a possible bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the multilateral talks, government sources said.

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11. Japan Military Build-up

Associated Press("JAPAN'S PARLIAMENT BOOSTS WAR READINESS", 06/16/04) reported that Japan's Parliament enacted legislation Monday aimed at improving the country's ability to protect itself if attacked, allowing troops to commandeer private property and boosting their cooperation with U.S. forces. The legislation, which the upper house passed by a vote of 163 to 31, clarifies when Japanese troops can use their weapons. It also would enable the government to swiftly evacuate civilians in an emergency. The lower house approved the measure last month. The seven bills expand on readiness measures enacted last year. The new legislation allows Japanese and American militaries to appropriate seaports, airports, roads, radio frequencies and other public property for military use to respond to an emergency. It also gives Japanese soldiers the right to raid ships suspected of carrying foreign military supplies. The legislation allows the government to set aside private property for use by the US military, and imposes penalties on owners who refuse to let authorities looking for such places to inspect their land. Union workers criticized the legislation Monday, saying it stepped over the rights of the Japanese people. "This bill affects those things most important to the people their lives and property yet it was not properly debated and was pushed through by the force of numbers of the Koizumi administration," the Japan Federation of Newspaper Workers' Union said in a statement. "By allowing this legislation, Japan is turning its back to the peace-seeking world and advancing along a path toward isolationism," the union said.

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12. US on DPRK Human Trafficking

Dong-A Ilbo ("NORTH KOREA CLASSIFIED IN LOWEST TIER FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING", 06/16/04) reported that in its annual Trafficking of Persons Report released on Monday, the U.S. classified the DPRK in the third and lowest tier and the ROK into the top tier just as it did in the previous year. According to the report, the DPRK, which was classified as Tier 3 along with Venezuela, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Cuba and other countries, is "a source country for persons trafficked for the purposes of forced labor and sexual exploitation." The report also pointed out that the country "operates forced-labor prison camps to punish criminals and repatriated North Koreans." It also stated, "Many nations provide humanitarian assistance and food to the North Korean people, but deteriorating economic conditions continue to pressure thousands into fleeing to China, Russia, and Mongolia." "The North Koreans` illegal status in other nations increases their vulnerability to trafficking schemes and sexual and physical abuse," according to the report. Regarding the ROK, it said that the ROK "acknowledges the problem and has shown a steady commitment to support victims, prosecute traffickers, and improve national laws to fight trafficking." However, it also pointed out that "South Korea is a source, transit, and destination country for women from the Philippines, Thailand, and other Southeast Asian countries who are trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Some Chinese and Russian women are trafficked to South Korea. Korean women are trafficked to Japan and to United States, sometimes via Canada." The report included Japan on the watch list, citing that "Japan`s trafficking problem is large and

Japanese organized crime groups (yakuza) that operate internationally are involved."

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13. ROK - PRC Relations

United Press International ("S.KOREA PROTESTS AT CHINA OVER DEFECTORS", 06/16/04) reported that the ROK protested the repatriation of seven DPRK refugee-seekers from the PRC, the Foreign Ministry said. The PRC informed the ROK Monday it sent the DPRK citizens back to their homeland, a ministry official said. The PRC did not provide information about when they were repatriated, the official said. The North Koreans were taken in March to a detention center in Tumen in the northeastern province of Jilin after trying to cross the border into Vietnam. ROK officials have since then asked the PRC not to repatriate them to the DPRK where they could face severe punishment. The ROK official said the North Koreans are believed to be those who were reported in March to have staged a hunger strike at the Chinese detention center, demanding refugee status. The ROK government summoned Chinese Ambassador to Seoul Li Bin Wednesday to express its "strong regret" at the repatriation, the official said.

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14. PRC Media Control

Financial Times("CHINA REDUCES SENTENCES OF OUTSPOKEN JOURNALISTS", 06/16/04) reported that a manager and editor of a prominent newspaper in southern PRC have had their sentences on corruption charges reduced after a wave of complaints that their trials had been staged as punishment for their critical reporting. But the new verdicts sliced only a few years off the original jail terms, disappointing the two men's supporters, who believe their case was used as a "show trial" to reinforce for local reporters the dangers of bucking the government's line on sensitive issues. Yu Huafeng, the paper's former general manager, had his sentence for embezzlement cut to eight years in prison from 12, and Li Minying, the former editor-in-chief, to six years from 11, for bribe-taking. A third man, Cheng Yizhong, a senior editor in the same newspaper group, who had also been taken into custody, was still in detention last night. Both men worked at the Southern Metropolitan Daily, a relatively outspoken paper that angered the Guangdong government with its expose last year of the deadly SARS virus when the authorities were trying to limit news of the disease. The paper has also campaigned on corruption and workers' rights, subjects on which the authorities set strict rules for coverage. The new verdicts were announced in a brief statement on Xinhua, the official news agency, late on Tuesday. "The original verdicts, by the Dongshan district court, were based on truthful and clear facts and reliable evidence; the judgment fit the crime and the judicial process was legal, but the punishment was relatively heavy," Xinhua said, quoting the Guangzhou intermediate people's court. Supporters of the men had established a website containing petitions and open letters from scholars from the PRC's most prestigious universities and reporters, saying the trial had been unfair and had brought shame on the country. The court rejected the men's defense that the money they were accused of stealing had been used to top up salaries for staff, a practice that had been going on for many years under different editors. "We all think this is a case of injustice. They are innocent," Xu Zhiyong, Yu's lawyer, told Reuters Tuesday night.

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15. PRC Domestic Economy

Associated Press("CHINA SAYS INFLATION IS UNDER CONTROL", 06/16/04) reported that the PRC sought to boost confidence in its ability to steer its economy toward slower growth, saying Wednesday it has inflation under control and that foreign investment remains steady. Dousing speculation that the PRC might quickly raise interest rates to help curb bank lending, state media on Wednesday cited a central bank official who said rates would not change until regulators had seen another three months of economic data. The brief report on the China Securities Journal's Web site cited Mu Huaipeng, director of the central bank's research division. The government has restricted investment approvals and ordered banks to limit lending, hoping to reduce economic growth from the sizzling 9.8 percent increase in the first quarter from a year ago. The official target for economic growth in 2004 is 7 percent. Those efforts should actually encourage foreign investors, Ma Xiuhong, a vice minister of commerce, told a news conference in Beijing. "China's growth at a sustainable level is attractive for foreign investment," Ma said. She said the 11.3 percent growth in foreign investment during the first five months of the year to $25.9 billion was a "proper and moderate level." The government forecasts that foreign investment in 2004 will be equal to or better than the $53.5 billion that poured into the PRC last year.

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16. PRC - Taiwan Relations

Reuters("CHINA GENERAL THREATENS WAR IF TAIWAN TARGETS DAM", 06/16/04) reported that a PRC general denounced an idea that Taiwan's military could threaten China's Three Gorges dam and said Wednesday that any strike on the world's biggest hydropower project would lead to war. In its annual report to the U.S. Congress on China's military power, the Pentagon said proponents of strikes against the PRC "apparently hope" that merely establishing places like the Three Gorges dam as targets would deter PRC military coercion. The PRC will "be seriously on guard against threats from 'Taiwan independence terrorists,"' People's Liberation Army (PLA) Lieutenant General Liu Yuan said in a commentary in the official China Youth Daily, warning against such a move. "(It) will not be able to stop war...it will have the exact opposite of the desired effect," Liu said. "It will provoke retaliation that will 'blot out the sky and cover up the earth'," he said, quoting a Chinese idiom.

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17. PRC AIDS Policy

Agence France Presse("CHINA AGREES TO FIRST OFFICIAL ORPHANAGE FOR AIDS CHILDREN",06/16/04) reported that in a new sign that the PRC is starting to face up to what could be a devastating AIDS epidemic, state media said the first orphanage will be built for children whose parents died of the disease. Premier Wen Jiabao said on a tour of Hubei province that AIDS orphans would also receive financial assistance, while in Beijing it has been decided that AIDS prevention education is to be made mandatory for high school students. Previously, officials have either denied AIDS orphans exist or have said there are few, while those campaigning on behalf of the orphans have been harassed and detained. The orphanage is to be built in Shangcai county, one of the worst hit areas in central China's Henan province. Covering two hectares, the project will start this year and cost 3.5 million yuan (423,216 dollars) for the first phase, said Huang Mengfu, chairman of the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce. AIDS orphans aged from six to nine would be admitted, Xinhua news agency reported. "As a special and disadvantaged social group, AIDS orphans deserve the most love and assistance from society," Huang said. "They not only suffer a low-quality

material life, but also meet with discrimination, which is completely unfair." Gao Yaojie, the PRC's most prominent AIDS activist, has told AFP she believes the ratio of patients to orphans in the PRC is around 1:2, perhaps higher.

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18. PRC Red Tides

Agence France-Presse ("COLOSSAL RED TIDES HIT CHINA'S BOHAI SEA, THREATENING FISHERIES", 06/16/04) reported that two massive red tides of algae have engulfed the PRC's Bohai Sea, threatening to contaminate seafood in the important fishery area, state media reported. The tides began on Friday near the mouth of the Yellow River, the second longest river in the PRC, affecting an area of 1,850 square kilometers (740 square miles), the State Oceanic Administration (SOA) said. Another red tide was first spotted Saturday near Tianjin, a major port city in north China, covering an area of 3,200 square kilometers. "A large number of remains of mosquitoes and flies could be seen floating on the surface of the affected water, but there is no sign of massive deaths of shellfish," said Chen Lianzeng, deputy director of SOA. "The red tides are continuing and could expand in the coming days," he was quoted as saying by Xinhua news agency. A "red tide" is a densely populated algae bloom that breeds in abundance and suffocates fish by sapping the water of oxygen while also producing toxins that can paralyze fish and contaminate seafood.

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19. PRC Mine Blast

Agence France Presse("AT LEAST 15 DEAD, SEVEN MISSING IN CHINA MINE BLAST", 06/16/04) reported that fifteen people were confirmed dead after a gas explosion at a coal mine in northwest China's Shaanxi province, local officials said. The blast occurred Tuesday afternoon in the No.1 coal mine of the Huangling Mining Co Ltd. when 85 workers were underground. Of them, 65 were rescued, including five injured miners who were rushed to hospital. The 15 killed dead included two rescuers, according to the provincial bureau for supervising safety in coal production. "So far 15 miners have been found dead and seven are missing," Chang Tianming, a staff member of control room of the mine, told AFP. "It was a gas explosion but the reasons are still under investigation." A task force has been set up to search for those still missing and to deal with the aftermath.

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