

NAPSNET Week in Review 16 May, 2003

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United States

1. US-ROK Presidential Summit

On May 14, 2003, President George W. Bush of the US of America and President Roh Moo-hyun of the Republic of Korea held a summit meeting at the White House in Washington, D.C. Noting that 2003 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the US-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty, the two leaders pledged to work together to promote the values of democracy, human rights and market economy shared by the people of both nations and to build a comprehensive and dynamic alliance relationship for continued peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia. President Bush and President Roh welcomed the fiftieth anniversary of the US-ROK alliance and paid tribute to those who have contributed to the alliance, particularly the Korean host communities and the members of US Forces Korea (USFK) who have devoted themselves to the defense of peace and freedom on the peninsula. In the context of modernizing the alliance, the two leaders agreed to work out plans to consolidate US forces around key hubs and to relocate the Yongsan garrison at an early date.

To read the full joint statement:

"ROK-US Summit Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 13, ROK)

"ROK President US Visit" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 12, US)

"ROK-US Presidential Summit" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 12, US)

"ROK President First Visit of US" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 12, ROK)

"ROK-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 12, PRC)

2. Canada on US Missile Defense

Canadian Foreign Minister Bill Graham gave his strongest indication yet that Canada is almost ready to sign on to the planned controversial US missile defense system. Speaking in the House of Commons, Graham rejected opposition suggestions that the national missile defence system, or NMD, was a space-based missile system. "Canada," he insisted, "remains firmly opposed to the installation of weapons in space. "The US missile defence system, to be in place by the year 2004, does not include the installation of weapons in space."

Nevertheless, Graham suggested Canada still had some problems, which he did not specify, in the US plan. "We regularly voice our concerns and any discussions we have on NMD will in fact enable us to voice those concerns more clearly and more cogently," he said.

"Canada on US Missile Defense" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 15, US)

"Canada on US Missile Defense" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 13, US)

3. Rumsfeld on New US Missile

US tactics in the war with Iraq including use of a new kind of missile that kills people without destroying buildings - demonstrate why the military must evolve into a lighter, faster force, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said Wednesday. Rumsfeld also defended American efforts to stabilize postwar Iraq under questioning from skeptical senators. "The circumstances of people in that country are better than they were before the war," Rumsfeld said. "They're going to get better every day. ... We can't make it like the US in five minutes." American troops in Iraq made first use of a new kind of helicopter-launched Hellfire missile, Rumsfeld said. The AGM-114N Metal Augmented Charge Hellfire uses a thermobaric warhead, which creates a blast wave that kills people while leaving a building, bunker or cave intact. Rumsfeld said the new missile "can take out the first floor of a building without damaging the floors above, and is capable of reaching around corners, striking enemy forces that hide in caves or bunkers and hardened multiroom complexes." Marine Corps AH-1 Cobra helicopters used the missile in Iraq.

"Rumsfeld on New US Missile" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 15, US)

4. US on DPRK Laser Firing

The DPRK military may have aimed a laser at a US helicopter in March, a US official said Tuesday, shortly after the DPRK reaffirmed its decision to nullify an agreement to remain free of nuclear weapons. The aircraft's sensors detected the unknown type of laser while it was flying near the heavily fortified frontier that divides the ROK and the DPRK, the US military official said on condition of anonymity. No one was injured and no equipment was damaged in the incident. "Two USFK (US Forces Korea) pilots during a routine training mission in March were alerted by onboard laser detecting equipment that laser systems may have illuminated their aircraft," he said. He did not elaborate on the kind of laser.

"US on DPRK Laser Firing" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 13, US)

5. US DPRK Missiles, Drugs Crackdown

The US is exploring ways to crack down on drug and missile exports that earn hard currency for the DPRK and does not plan a detailed counter to a proposal by the DPRK at recent negotiations in Beijing, national security adviser Condoleezza Rice said on Monday. Rice also said that President Bush was open to another round of talks with the DPRK and remained committed to a diplomatic resolution to the nuclear crisis, although he continued to keep "all options open." "Unfortunately, the DPRK seem to trade in drugs and missiles and that seems to be their export and we are looking at ways to deal with that," she said. The international community "needs better tools to deal with a state like North Korea that appears to be determined to violate its international agreements and I think we're going to work more aggressively with other states to see what other tools we can build," she said.

"US DPRK Missiles, Drugs Crackdown" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 12, US)

6. US "War on Terror"

Criticism is mounting at the failure of the US to find Iraqi nuclear, chemical or biological weapons programs, with some experts raising questions about US intelligence as well as the way the Bush administration justified the war. Over a month after the end of hostilities launched by President Bush to find and destroy Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, special US military teams have found little to justify the administration's claim that Iraq was concealing vast stocks of chemical and biological agents and was actively working on a covert nuclear weapons program. Last week's disclosure that a possible biological mobile weapons lab had been found was the most definitive development so far. Even that discovery, if confirmed, fell far short of claims made by Bush and other officials before the war. "We can conclude that the large number of deployed chemical weapons the administration said that Iraq had are not there. We can also conclude that Iraq's nuclear weapons program was not nearly as sophisticated as the administration claimed," said David Albright, president of the Institute for Science and International Security and a former U.N. nuclear weapons inspector in Iraq.

"US "War on Terror"" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 12, US)

7. Comment of US Ambassador in ROK on Korean Peninsula

US ambassador Thomas Hubbard affirmed Sunday that US and ROK were both committed to preventing DPRK from continuing its nuclear development. "All countries should participate in checking the acts of North Korea, which could export nuclear materials to other powers such as terrorist groups," Hubbard said during an appearance on an SBS-TV program. "The objective of US policy on North Korea is the immediate and complete abandonment of its nuclear weapon program. This position will not change."

"Diplomatic Efforts to Solve DPRK Nuclear Problem" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 12, ROK)

8. Russia-US Relations

A senior American diplomat said on May 5, 2003 that US President George W. Bush and Russian President Putin will meet on June 1 in Russia, which will be the first meeting between the two countries' heads since the Iraq War. US Secretary of State Colin Powell will make preparations for the meeting by visiting Moscow next week. The diplomat said that the bilateral relations are under a condition of "recovering", and US will not allow the negative differences of the two countries' opinions on Iraq war influence the newly-built bilateral co-operations, said the report.

"Russia-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 12, PRC)

9. US DPRK Food Aid

The US said it had sent 40,000 metric tons of food promised in February to the DPRK. The donation was first announced after Secretary of State Colin Powell visited the PRC, Japan and ROK in February, a trip that took in the inauguration of new ROK President Roh Moo-Hyun who met President George W. Bush at the White House on Wednesday. "The US has provided 40,000 metric tons of humanitarian food assistance through the World Food Program to North Korea this year," said Brenda Greenberg, a State Department spokeswoman. The announcement came as Roh wrapped up a visit to the US in San Francisco, a day after meeting President George W. Bush at the White House.

"US DPRK Food Aid" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 16, US)

10. PRC-US Espionage Case

Katrina Leung, a millionaire socialite, pleaded not guilty in a Los Angeles federal court to being a double agent for the PRC while working with US intelligence. Leung's Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) handler and alleged lover, James Smith, also pleaded innocent to federal charges in the case. The court said separate trials for the two would start July 1. The case has caused enormous embarrassment to the US intelligence service and lawyers for Leung, who has been a prominent fundraiser for the Republican Party, said she has been made a scapegoat for the intelligence failures. A grand jury indicted the pair last week. Leung is accused of being a double agent but does not face espionage charges.

"PRC-US Espionage Case" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 13, US)

Korean Peninsula

1. DPRK on DPRK-ROK Nuclear Accord

The DPRK declared a decade-old agreement with the ROK to keep the Korean peninsula nuclear weapons-free a "dead document" and blamed the US for the demise of the accord. In a statement denouncing the US on the eve of a White House summit between US President George W. Bush and South Korean counterpart Roh Moo-Hyun, the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said the 1992 North-South pact had been nullified. The agreement was the last legal restraint on the DPRK's nuclear ambitions after the DPRK pulled out of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and abandoned a 1994 arms control accord with the US. Last month the PRC warned the DPRK that pursuit of nuclear weapons would breach the joint North-South accord, while the ROK also reminded the DPRK it was still bound by the agreement. "The Bush administration has systematically and completely torpedoed the process of denuclearization on the Korean peninsula," KCNA said. "The inter-Korean declaration on denuclearization of the Korean peninsula was thus reduced to a dead document..."

"DPRK on DPRK-ROK Nuclear Accord" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 13, US)

"ROK on DPRK Nuclear Brinkmanship" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 13, US)

"DPRK No-Nuclear Accord Nullification" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 12, US)

2. US-ROK Presidential Summit

ROK President Roh Moo-Hyun headed to San Francisco a day after sealing a new friendship with US President George W. Bush with a tough message for the DPRK on nuclear weapons. Roh was due to meet US business leaders in a sector of California that is famed for its high-tech industries and is the source of a huge chunk of Seoul's trade relationship with the US, its largest export market. The ROK leader was cheered by his first-ever meeting with Bush, at the White House on Wednesday, which wrapped up with a working dinner in the residential portion of the executive mansion. In a joint statement after their talks, Bush and Roh warned they would "not tolerate" a nuclear DPRK but would seek a "peaceful" end to the showdown over the communist state's quest for nuclear weapons. Bush moved to assuage fears of a US military response to the showdown with his "axis of evil" foe, but neither side said in detail how it proposed to thwart the DPRK's drive for nuclear weapons. The US side also promised to retain a "robust forward presence" on the Korean peninsula, but signaled that it would try to ease the burden on the ROK people posed by its 37,000-strong garrison. "I assured the president we will continue to work to achieve a peaceful solution," Bush said Wednesday in a symbolic joint appearance with Roh in the White House Rose Garden.

"ROK-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 16, US)

"ROK San Francisco Arrival" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 16, US)

"ROK-US Summit Talk" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 16, ROK)

"US-ROK Presidential Summit" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 15, US)

"ROK-US Presidential Summit" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 13, US)

"ROK-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 12, ROK)

3. US on ROK US Military Presence

President George W. Bush has reaffirmed the US commitment to a "robust forward presence" on the Korean peninsula and pledged in a joint statement to work with ROK President Roh Moo-Hyun on redistributing US troops within the country. "President Bush reaffirmed the US commitment to a robust forward presence on the peninsula and in the Asia-Pacific region," said the final statement, provided by Roh's entourage as the two men wrapped up a 30-minute White House summit preceding a state dinner. "The two leaders agreed to work out plans to consolidate US forces around key hubs and to relocate the Yongsan garrison at an early date," said the statement Wednesday. "President Bush pledged to consult closely with President Roh on the appropriate posture of (US forces in Korea) during the transition to a more capable and sustainable US military presence on the peninsula," it added.

"US on ROK US Military Presence" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 15, US)

4. DPRK-ROK Relations

The DPRK on Saturday accused the ROK of committing "an act of treachery," responding to comments by Seoul's defense minister who called for greater surveillance and vigilance over a possible attack from the DPRK. ROK Defense Minister Cho Young-kil on Thursday wrote to armed forces chiefs stressing the need to prepare for "full combat posture" amid rising chances of the DPRK committing various provocations. Cho "was so reckless as to malign the peace-loving North where his fellow countrymen live, instead of denouncing the US for seeking to start a war of aggression against the Korean nation," the DPRK's Roong Sinmun daily said in an editorial. "The ROK military will not be able to escape an irrevocable destruction in the end if it persists in its treacherous acts, relying upon its American master, not on the nation," Rodong Sinmun said.

"DPRK-ROK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 12, US)

5. ROK Troops to Iraq

ROK will complete its dispatch of troops to help with the rebuilding of Iraq this week. A group of 329 military engineers will leave Wednesday morning for Iraq via Kuwait aboard a charter plane. This will complete the contingent of 675 Korea troops ROK is sending to Iraq project ? including 575 military engineers and 100 medics. A group of 326 engineers and medics was sent to Iraq April 30, following an advance team of 20 that left earlier. The new group has been training to get used to conditions in Iraq. It will arrive at Nasiriyah Thursday. The ROK troops will be stationed at the Camp Adder, US Army's logistics supply area in south-central Iraq. The engineers and medics will support the allied force's reconstruction projects and help Iraqi civilians.

"ROK Troops to Iraq" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 13, ROK)

6. DPRK Drug Smuggling

That for nearly a month, agents of the Australian police had been shadowing three men, expecting them to receive a shipment of drugs -- from somewhere. This seemed the night: Detectives had followed the three to a desolate, windswept beach on Australia's southern coast. As the suspects waited there in the midst of a storm, the worst in years, the agents peered through sheets of rain and saw an extraordinary sight: a DPRK freighter, maneuvering dangerously close to rocks and coral reefs. Soon a dinghy was fighting its way toward shore carrying 110 pounds of almost pure heroin, stamped with the best brand from Southeast Asia's clandestine drug labs, police say. Proceeds from the drugs would go to prop up the impoverished DPRK government, they believe. This was followed by a dramatic, four-day chase of the freighter through angry seas. By the time it ended on April 20 with Australian special forces soldiers sliding down ropes from a helicopter onto the ship's rolling deck, the vessel had become the centerpiece of a major diplomatic uproar and another obstacle to solving the tense standoff between the DPRK and the US over the DPRK's nuclear program. US officials say the capture is proof of their long-standing charge that the DPRK government has for years operated as a crime syndicate, smuggling drugs and counterfeit money around the world to generate income to keep itself alive. Secretary of State Colin L. Powell recently told a Senate committee the seizure shows that North the DPRK "thrives on criminality." Any conciliation with the DPRK, he told reporters last week, must include an end to its nuclear program and "criminal activities."

"DPRK Drug Smuggling" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 12, US)

7. Cash Delivered to DPRK for Summit Talks

\$200 million wired by Hyundai Merchant Marine just before the June 2000 inter-Korea summit went to three accounts held by DPRK, including one owned by Workers' Party, at the Macao branch of the Bank of China, ROK government officials and members of the financial community told the JoongAng Ilbo Wednesday. This contradicts the statements made by senior aides to former President Kim Dae-jung, who said that ROK government merely facilitated a transfer by Hyundai to win development projects. The Hyundai transfer was allegedly funded by Korean Development Bank, a state institution, and former Hyundai and bank officials have alleged that the loan to Hyundai had merely been a cover for ROK government's payment to DPRK.

"Cash Delivered to DPRK for Summit Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 16, ROK)

8. Defector on DPRK Nuclear Capacity

A man claiming to be a former DPRK People's Army general who fled the impoverished state last year has told a Japanese publication that Pyongyang secretly imported nuclear bombs from the former Soviet Union and developed dozens of its own weapons. The claims were among details about the Stalinist state's military command and its leader Kim Jong-Il contained in an article in the June edition of the respected Gekkan Gendai (Modern Times Monthly), based on an interview. The general told the magazine that the DPRK secretly imported nuclear bombs from the former Soviet Union in 1983 and now has four Soviet-made nuclear missiles which, with a range of 8,000 kilometers (5,000 miles), could reach the west coast of the US. "The North Korean army even has tens of nuclear weapons it has developed itself in addition to those made by the former Soviet Union," the general was quoted as saying. The four nuclear-tipped missiles are stored at an underground site in Potaeri, in Samjiyon district at the foot of Mount Paekdu on the border with China, he said. The article said the general was the "highest ranked" DPRK defector since Hwang Jang-Yop, top ideologue and secretary of the ruling Workers Party, was granted political asylum in the ROK in 1997. The magazine withheld the man's name, rank and other details at his request, using the pseudonym, An Yong-Chol.

"Defector on DPRK Nuclear Capacity" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 15, US)

"DPRK Defectors Repatriated to DPRK" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 16, ROK)

"Defecting DPRK Soldiers" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 16, ROK)

9. DPRK-PRC Relations

Kim Jong Il, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea and chairman of the National Defense Commission of the DPRK, has sent condolences to PRC leaders over the submarine disaster, the PRC Foreign Ministry said May 5. The condolence messages were sent on May 4 to Chinese President Hu Jintao and Chairman of the Central Military Commission Jiang Zemin. In the messages, Kim Jong Il expressed his deep sorrow at the death of the PRC Navy sailors and extended his sincere condolences through the PRC leaders to the families of the victims of the disaster, said the report.

"DPRK-PRC Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 12, PRC)

10. US-ROK Trade Talks

Trade talks between the ROK and the US on stiff tariffs imposed by Washington on computer chip imports have collapsed, officials said here. Last month the US slapped punitive tariffs on imports of memory chips produced by the ROK's Hynix Semiconductor Inc. in a preliminary ruling. Talks were convened in Paris Tuesday as the ROK sought to win a suspension of the sanctions against the world's third largest memory chipmaker. Hynix has been targeted by US and European rivals who charge that government bailouts of the ailing firm constitute illegal subsidies. The US ruling in April called for countervailing duties of 57.37 percent on chips shipped to the US by Hynix. The ROK has denied US claims that it subsidized Hynix through bailout packages and has threatened to file a grievance at the World Trade Organization.

"US-ROK Trade Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 16, US)

11. ROK Trucking Strike

ROK truckers have agreed to return to work after winning concessions from the government to end a week-long strike that has idled the world's third largest container port. The agreement was reached after overnight talks between strike leaders, transport companies and government officials. Under the agreement, the government accepted almost all demands from unions including tax cuts and other measures to protect the interests of truckers.

Hundreds of truckers from the Korea Cargo Transport Workers Union (KCTWU) unanimously endorsed the agreement in a vote outside a college building in Busan, which is the country's largest port and handles 75 percent of the ROK's export cargo shipping. "This is our victory," announced an elated strike leader as the truckers held a rally of celebration.

"ROK Trucking Strike" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 16, US)

"ROK Domestic Economy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 13, US)

12. DPRK Hacker Training?

The DPRK is suspected of building nuclear weapons, has developed another weapon: cyber terrorism, a senior ROK military officer said Friday. Maj. Gen. Song Young-geun, head of the ROK military's Defense Security Command, said the DPRK is churning out more than 100 computer hackers a year, and urged the ROK to boost its ability to fight "cyber threats from the outside." Computers are a rarity among the DPRK's 22 million population. Visitors say the Internet is available only at a few hotels in the capital, Pyongyang. Yet, "North Korea is reinforcing its cyber terror capabilities," Song said at a seminar on information protection in Seoul. Song did not produce evidence to back his claim.

"DPRK Hacker Training?" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 16, US)

People's Republic of China

1. PRC Diplomatic Efforts to Solve DPRK Nuclear Problem

Joongang Ilbo (Kim Young-sae, "CHINESE AIDE REPORTEDLY IS PUSHING NEW NORTH TALKS," Seoul, 05/12/03) reported that PRC Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi passed through Seoul over the weekend for consultations on DPRK nuclear problem, a Foreign Ministry official said Sunday. His discussions with his ROK counterpart, Kim Jae-sup, were conducted with no publicity. PRC's senior diplomat handling DPRK issues was believed to have urged that more dialogue with DPRK, after last month's three-nation meeting in Beijing, should begin soon. Wang left for Tokyo Sunday.

"Diplomatic Efforts to Solve DPRK Nuclear Problem" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 12, ROK)

2. Response to PRC SARS Execution Policy

International human rights groups and health experts criticized new laws which allow the PRC to execute or imprison for life anyone who violates SARS quarantine and spreads the disease. "This is completely out of line with international practice and is sending the wrong message to the population," said Nicolas Becquelin, research director for Human Rights in China (HRIC). "The effects are likely to be the opposite: scaring the public even more." Becquelin said quarantine procedures have not been laid out, with local governments doing whatever they wish. "That so many people are escaping quarantine also highlights the little trust that the population has for the authorities: they know that their life is not worth much," Becquelin said. "It's also a consequence of not being forthcoming with information on SARS from the beginning

"Response to PRC SARS Execution Policy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 16, US)

"PRC SARS Developments" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 15, US)

3. PRC SARS Rural Battle

Health experts set out for the PRC's poor rural hinterlands in an attempt to check the spread of SARS as 21 new deaths from the virus were reported in the PRC, Taiwan and Hong Kong. World Health Organization teams were fanning out across the PRC in hopes of better understanding the spread of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome as fears rose the situation in the world's most populous nation could be much worse than previously admitted, a WHO official said Monday. Up until now the WHO's focus has been on Beijing and the source of the outbreak in southern Guangdong province, two areas which have seen the largest number of cases. The PRC reported 12 new SARS deaths and 75 new cases Monday, mostly in the capital, as fatalities leapt back into double digits after several days of decline. Beijing authorities also announced thousands more residents had been placed under quarantine. The Beijing foreign affairs office said more than 23,000 people had been quarantined in the capital, an increase of more than 4,000 from the previous day. But the focus of attention is shifting increasingly to the countryside where primitive medical facilities and poor information are expected to hamper the battle to keep SARS from devastating rural areas.

"PRC SARS Rural Battle" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 12, US)

4. PRC WHO Taiwan Entry Protest

The PRC has voiced strong opposition to the passage of a bill by the US Congress supporting Taiwan's participation as an observer in the World Health Assembly summit in Geneva next week, state media said. "Taiwan, as a province of China, is ineligible to participate in the World Health Organization, an organization open only to sovereign countries, nor is it eligible to attend the WHO as an observer," foreign ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue was quoted as saying by the China Daily. The US House of Representatives cleared the bill for the White House on Wednesday without objection. Japan and the European Union are also supporting Taiwan's bid for observer status at the WHO ahead of the body's 56th World Health Assembly beginning May 19.

"PRC WHO Taiwan Entry Protest" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 16, US)

"Across Taiwan Straits Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 12, PRC)

Japan

1. Japan-DPRK Relations

Japan is hoping to resume normalization talks with DPRK if it is allowed to take part in the next round of talks between the US, PRC and the DPRK over Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions, a Japanese ambassador said Monday. But Tokyo should not rule out the use of force under the Japan-US alliance if the North does not budge over the nuclear issue, said Katsunari Suzuki, Japan's representative in the Japan-DPRK normalization talks, after Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe noted that every option remained open and talked of the possibility of Japan upgrading its missile interceptor system and reviewing the scope of its self-defense policy. Abe and Suzuki made their remarks at a forum entitled "North Korean Nuclear Weapons and Security in East Asia," organized by a unit of the Yomiuri Shimbun, a major Japanese daily.

"Japan-DPRK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 12, ROK)

2. Japan-US Summit on DPRK Issue

The DPRK will be among the top issues for discussion when Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi meets US President George W. Bush later this month, a top Japanese official said on May 8. "Naturally, North Korea and Iraq will be topics of discussion," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda told a news conference. At a later news conference, Fukuda said the two would meet on May 23 at Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas—a nod to Japan's staunch diplomatic support for the US in the recent war in Iraq.

"Japan-US Relations over DPRK Issues" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 12, ROK)

"The Upcoming Japan-US Summit Meeting" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 12, PRC)

3. Japan Wartime Preparedness Bill

Japan's main ruling and opposition parties united in the lower house of parliament to vote through three war contingency bills that give the nation its first legal framework for responding to military attack since World War II. Although Japan's constitution renounces war in settling international disputes, it has long been generally accepted that Japan retains the right to self-defence. But the bills spell out for the first time the circumstances under which the government can mobilize Japan's armed forces and the powers the military would have in an emergency to requisition land and other property including private vehicles, fuel and food. They also outline the responsibilities of central government and its power to order local governments in wartime, and expand the size and scope of the Security Council headed by the prime minister in national emergencies. The ruling coalition, led by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), along with opposition Democratic and Liberal parties, passed the bills with an overwhelming majority, a parliamentary spokeswoman said. The Communist Party and Social Democratic Party, representing 38 legislators in the 477-strong assembly, opposed the bills.

"Japan Wartime Preparedness Bill" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 16, US)

"Japan Military Boost" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 15, US)

"Japan's Military Emergency Legislation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 13, JAPAN)

4. Japanese Logistic Support for US

The Japanese Cabinet on last Friday approved a plan to extend Japan's logistic support for US-led antiterrorism operations in Afghanistan by six months until Nov. 1. The Self-Defense Forces (SDF) have conducted refueling and airlift operations for the US and its allies working in and around Afghanistan based on a special two-year law detailing Japan's antiterrorism measures introduced in October 2001. The actual support operations were set in a six-month basic plan, which was compiled in November 2001 based on the antiterrorism law. The plan has already been extended twice by the government and was to end May 19. Defense Agency Director General Shigeru Ishiba told news conference the government judged that another extension is necessary because "terrorist threats still remain" and "the purpose of the antiterrorism law has not yet been fulfilled." He said if the situation remains the same when the law expires Nov. 1, the government will consider extending the law beyond the two-year term.

"Japanese Logistic Support for US" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 13, JAPAN)

5. US Bases in Japan

The Okinawa government was informed last Wednesday evening that the US Navy conducted underwater explosives drills nearby in the East China Sea as planned and that a cancellation notice issued earlier in the day was a mistake, local officials said. According to the prefectural government, the Foreign Ministry said the drills in the East China Sea and in the Sea of Japan near Nagasaki Prefecture were carried out last Wednesday. According to the Japan Coast Guard, the US Navy gave advance notice to Japanese authorities that it would conduct the drills on Wednesday in six locations, including the exclusive economic zone some 300 km west of the main island of Okinawa. The Fisheries Agency urged the US military to cancel the drills out of fear they would have a serious impact on fishing operations. The local fisheries industry reacted sharply to the plan.

"US Bases in Japan" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 13, JAPAN)

6. Iraqi Reconstruction Issues

Japan's government is considering allowing Iraq to temporarily suspend repayment of public-sector foreign debts accumulated under the regime of Saddam Hussein, sources said. The move falls in line with an expected US proposal to temporarily freeze debt repayment at a meeting of finance ministers of Group of Seven (G-7) nations set for Friday and Saturday in Deauville, France. As of January 2002, Iraq owed major creditor nations more than \$13 billion. Japan, the biggest creditor among the G-7 nations, is owed about \$3.5 billion. By suspending repayment, Tokyo intends to resume government trade insurance for companies doing business with Iraq. This would be impossible as long as Baghdad remains in default. The government hopes the move will signal its support for a rapid reconstruction of the country, sources said. The government believes it essential the international community reach agreement on efforts to reconstruct Iraq when leaders of Group of Eight nations meet June 1-3 in Evian, France. Washington has suggested Iraq's debts be substantially reduced and repayment deferred to allow income from the country's oil supplies be used toward reconstruction.

"Iraqi Reconstruction Issues" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 12, ROK)

7. Japan Zero Growth Domestic Economy

Japan recorded zero economic growth in the first three months of 2003, underscoring fading hopes for an export-led recovery and growing fears of a global downturn. The numbers for the gross domestic product - the value of a nation's goods and services - for the January-March period released Friday by the Cabinet Office were in line with expectations.

Economists surveyed by Dow Jones Newswires forecast on average that the economy would show no growth during the quarter. The report reflects the deep problems of Japan's economy, where stock prices have plunged, people are losing hope and prices are consistently spiraling downward in a deflationary trend, said Hiromichi Shirakawa, chief economist at UBS Warburg in Tokyo. "It's now beyond a doubt that the problem of deflation is getting worse," he said. "The numbers are totally negative." Export growth that had led last year's fragile recovery, including a 4.5 percent rise in the final quarter of 2002, slid 0.5 percent in the first quarter of this year. Imports climbed 1.4 percent.

"Japan Zero Growth Domestic Economy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 16, US)

"Japan Domestic Economy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 15, US)

8. Japan SARS Virus Entry

The Japanese government said it has started investigating whether the virus that causes SARS has entered the country, after a Taiwanese man who visited Japan was believed to have been infected with Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. The Japanese government will conduct health checks on staff and guests at four hotels where the man stayed, an official with the Japanese health ministry said Friday. The man, who is a physician who had cared for at least one SARS patient in Taiwan, came to Japan on May 8, toured western Japan, and returned to Taiwan on May 13, the official said. "Details about the situation are still unclear," the official said. "We are still collecting information."

"Japan SARS Virus Entry" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 16, US)

9. Japan-Taiwan Relations

A Japanese civic group said it was considering inviting former Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui to Japan in October. The group that studies the work of Japanese educator Inazo Nitobe, who died in 1933, wants to invite Lee to the 70th anniversary of Nitobe's death in October, said Ichiro Nakagawa, staff at the Nitobe Center in Morioka, 470 kilometers (294 miles) north of Tokyo. The group, Nitobe Inazo Kai, is associated with the center. The Japanese foreign ministry said it will make a decision on whether to issue a visa to Lee, if he applies, after considering the international situation and various factors. Lee withdrew his application for a visa for Japan in November after his scheduled speech in Tokyo was cancelled and amid the PRC's opposition to the trip. In April 2001, Lee made a five-day visit to Japan for a medical check-up, prompting the PRC to cancel visits to Japan by high-ranking officials.

"Japan-Taiwan Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 15, US)

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