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United States

1. US on DPRK Attack Deterrence

The US is capable of repulsing any swift attack from the DPRK in the Korean peninsula, the US military commander in the ROK confidently told a congressional hearing. General Leon Laporte said that aside from US and ROK troops, he was confident that US forces in the Pacific, including from Japan, would reinforce the military capability against the DPRK if the situation warranted.

"US on DPRK Attack Deterrence" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 31, 2004)

2. US-Japan-ROK DPRK Talks

Senior officials of the US, Japan, and ROK plan to hold unofficial talks on the DPRK nuclear issue on April 7 and 8 in the US. Mitoji Yabunaka, director of the Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau of Japan's Foreign Ministry, ROK Deputy Foreign Minister Lee Soo Hyuck and James Kelly, US assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, are likely to meet in San Francisco.

"US-Japan-ROK DPRK Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 1, 2004)

Korean Peninsula

1. DPRK on Nuclear Freeze Compensation

DPRK Minister of Foreign Affairs Ban Ki-moon, who is visiting the PRC, stated on March 30, "According to the PRC Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing, North Korea has expressed intentions to accept the US' demand for 'complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantling (CVID)' of its nuclear programs."

"DPRK on Nuclear Freeze Compensation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 30, 2004)

2. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Freeze Offer

The ROK's Foreign Minister Ban Ki-Moon said a DPRK proposal for a nuclear freeze would be unacceptable unless the DPRK shuttered all its nuclear facilities. Speaking after returning from visit Beijing where he met with his PRC counterpart Ban said, "The North should clarify its position on what it means exactly when it talks about a freeze and the extent of such a freeze."

"ROK on DPRK Nuclear Freeze Offer" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 31, 2004)

3. DPRK WMD Transfers

Senior US military officials say they are concerned about possible DPRK transfers of nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction to terrorist groups. In testimony Wednesday to a congressional committee, General Leon LaPorte, commander of US forces in the ROK said that the possibility of DPRK weapons or nuclear materials falling into the hands of terrorists is "perhaps our biggest fear."

"DPRK WMD Transfers" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 1, 2004)

4. ROK Presidential Impeachment Hearing

ROK President Roh Moo-Hyun has failed to appear in person at the Constitutional Court's first hearing on his impeachment, forcing a postponement of the case. The nine justices of the court suspended the session after 15 minutes and said they would ask Roh to attend a new hearing on April 2. If Roh again fails to attend, the court is expected to proceed in his absence.

"ROK Presidential Impeachment Hearing" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 30, 2004)

5. ROK Parliamentary Elections

The ROK opened the race for the April 15 parliamentary elections, with opinion polls showing that a small progressive party backed by President Roh Moo-Hyun could secure a big victory. Support for the Uri Party, which had only 49 seats in the outgoing 270-member National Assembly, surged dramatically after Roh was impeached and suspended from office by the opposition-controlled parliament last month. Surveys show the Uri Party, founded only six months ago, could take control of the National Assembly as the majority party.

"ROK Parliamentary Elections" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 2, 2004)

"ROK Parliamentary Elections" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 1, 2004)

6. DPRK Defector

A DPRK man who leaked evidence that chemical weapons were tested on prisoners has apparently been handed back to the DPRK by the PRC. Kang Byong-sop said the evidence he supplied, which was first reported by the BBC, was in fact faked by his son. The evidence provided by Kang, a so-called letter of transfer, appeared to authorize chemical weapons testing on political prisoners. The letter was featured in a BBC documentary broadcast in February, whose allegations were dismissed by the DPRK as US-inspired propaganda.

"DPRK Defector" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 31, 2004)

7. DPRK on US Aegis Air Defence System

The DPRK condemned a US plan to deploy a destroyer equipped with the high-tech Aegis air defense system off the Korean coast this year as a preparation for war. The DPRK will boost its nuclear deterrent force to protect itself against war, a DPRK foreign ministry spokesman responded.

"DPRK on US Aegis Air Defence System" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 31, 2004)

8. ROK Political Corruption

A team of special prosecutors wrapped up a three-month graft probe of former aides to President Roh Moo-Hyun by indicting one ex-official and clearing two others of any wrongdoing. The team of 70 investigators empowered by parliament in December to open the investigation charged Roh's former presidential secretary for general affairs, Choi Do-Sul, with accepting 491 million won (425,200 dollars) in illegal funds ahead of the presidential election in December 2002. The probe cleared two others, Lee Kwang-Jae and Yang Gil-Seung.

"ROK Political Corruption" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 31, 2004)

9. ROK-DPRK Family Reunions

A group of 491 elderly South Koreans left for the DPRK by bus Thursday for temporary reunions with their Northern relatives whom they have not seen for more than a half century. The trip marked the second stage of an inter-Korean Red Cross program to help reunite separated family members.

"ROK-DPRK Family Reunions" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 1, 2004)

10. ROK-US Relations

The ROK's acting President Goh Kun on Thursday called for strengthening an alliance with the US as "No. 1 priority" in the country's foreign policy. Prime Minister Goh, known as "Mr. Stability," has pledged to boost the ROK's alliance with the US since he took over the government as an interim head of state following the March 12 parliamentary impeachment of President Roh Moo-hyun.

"ROK-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 1, 2004)

11. US on ROK Anti-American Sentiments

USFK commander Gen. Leon J. Laporte and US Pacific fleet commander Admiral Thomas Fargo attended a US House Armed Forces Committee session Wednesday and take pains to calm nervous lawmakers who questioned the two about the steady increase in anti-Americanism in Korea and the impeachment of President Roh. Rep. Kurt Weldon (Rep., Pennsylvania) asked Laporte about public opinion surveys that revealed that most ROK citizens consider the US a bigger threat than the DPRK. The general replied that there are many such surveys being conducted, but if you actually talk with Korean citizens, they firmly support the US-Korea alliance.

"US on ROK Anti-American Sentiments" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 1, 2004)

People's Republic of Korea

1. Taiwan Ballistic Missile Development

Taiwan plans to develop surface-to-surface missiles capable of hitting rival China, according to a leading defense journal. Tentative plans include the production of 30 mid-range (2,000 kilometre, 1,250 mile) and 120 short-range (1,000 kilometre) surface-to-surface missiles capable of striking the PRC.

"Taiwan Ballistic Missile Development " (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 1, 2004)

2. Taiwan Ultra-high Frequency Early Warning Radar Requests

The US Pentagon has said Taiwan has requested the sale of two ultra-high frequency long-range early warning radars capable of detecting ballistic and cruise missiles. It said they were worth nearly \$2.5 billion. Pentagon officials said the announcement had no connection with PRC-Taiwan tensions in the wake of the re-election in Taipei of President Chen Shui-bien.

"Taiwan Ultra-high Frequency Early Warning Radar Requests" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 31, 2004)

3. Cross-Straits Relations

Taiwan's ties with the PRC would forever be deadlocked if the PRC refused to recognize Taiwan's sovereignty, President Chen Shui-bian said Tuesday, and he vowed to adopt a new constitution despite the risk of war.

"Cross-Straits Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 30, 2004)

4. PRC Espionage

A woman accused as a double-agent for the PRC who had an affair with an FBI agent talked with a PRC government official and shared secret information about other agents, according to court papers. Recent briefs filed by prosecutors reveal new details in the government's case against Katrina Leung and now-retired FBI agent James J. Smith. Leung was a longtime FBI source of PRC intelligence for the FBI but also began working for the PRC Ministry of State Security around 1990, supplying information about her FBI employers, federal prosecutors allege in the recent briefs.

"PRC Espionage" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 31, 2004)

5. PRC on US Fingerprinting

The PRC said it would retaliate against a US decision to fingerprint PRC citizens applying for non-immigrant visas by imposing its own series of tightened rules for Americans visiting the PRC. US holders of diplomatic passports will have to apply for ordinary visas, and pay visa fees, when wishing to visit the PRC in a private capacity, the foreign ministry said on its website. Consular staff at PRC diplomatic representations in the US will also ask some US visa applicants to appear for personal interviews. The ministry also announced an end to visa on arrival for US citizens, which has previously been provided at selected points of entry, such as the city of Shenzhen north of Hong Kong.

"PRC on US Fingerprinting" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 30, 2004)

6. PRC-Saudi Arabia Oil Relations

Saudi Arabia is eager to increase oil sales to the PRC and set up joint refining projects there and mining ventures in the kingdom, Saudi Oil Minister Ali al-Nuaimi stated. "The Kingdom supplies China at present with more than 300,000 barrels of oil per day but we are seeking to increase this amount given the rising demand in China," said Nuaimi who arrived in the PRC on Thursday for a three-day visit.

"PRC-Saudi Arabia Oil Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 2, 2004)

7. PRC "Tiananmen Mothers" Release

PRC authorities have released two of three women arrested for seeking justice for victims of the 1989 crackdown on Tiananmen Square, relatives said. Huang Jinping was released Thursday and Zhang Xianling Friday after being detained since Sunday. The women are part of the "Tiananmen Mothers" activist group which for years has petitioned the government to reassess and take responsibility for sending troops to crush the 1989 pro-democracy protests in Beijing's Tiananmen Square, killing hundreds, perhaps as many as a thousand people.

"PRC 'Tiananmen Mothers' Release" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 2, 2004)

Japan

1. Japan-DPRK Relations

Taku Yamasaki, a former lawmaker and Vice President of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) said on Friday that he expects bilateral talks between Japan and the DPRK will resume soon. "Talks between the governments of Japan and North Korea might resume in the near future," Yamasaki was quoted as saying after returning to Japan on Friday. No further details were immediately available and Foreign Ministry officials were not available for comment.

"Japan-DPRK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 2, 2004)

2. Japan-DPRK 'Secret' Abduction Talks

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi criticized two leading members of the ruling party for visiting the PRC in order to make unauthorised overtures to DPRK officials. Two members of the Liberal Democratic Party had secretly gone to the PRC to meet the North Koreans to seek the resumption of stalled talks on the DPRK's abduction of Japanese nationals, news reports said. Taku Yamasaki, former secretary general of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and lawmaker Katsuei Hirasawa arrived in the PRC Thursday, Japanese media reported.

"Japan-DPRK 'Secret' Abduction Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 2, 2004)

3. Japan Iraq Troops Dispatch

The president of the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) has asked Japan to continue stationing Self-Defense Forces (SDF) in Iraq even after sovereignty is transferred from the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) in late June. Seyyid Muhammed Bahr ul-Uloom, a respected Shiite cleric, made the request during an interview with The Asahi Shimbun.

"Japan Iraq Troops Dispatch" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 2, 2004)

4. Japan Lift of Arms Export Ban?

Defense experts at the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) proposed that Japan should ditch one of its pacifist principles of not exporting arms. The report, "Changing Japan's Defense Policies," was compiled by an influential LDP panel headed by House of Representatives member Toshio Kojima. Japan introduced a comprehensive arms export ban in 1976.

"Japan Lift of Arms Export Ban?" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 2, 2004)

5. US-Japan Nuclear Aircraft Carrier Deployment?

The US has yet to comment on whether it will deploy a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier for the first time in Japan as a replacement for the conventionally powered carrier Kitty Hawk, Japan's top government spokesman Yasuo Fukuda said Thursday. 'The US government told us that it has yet to make any decision' on the replacement of the Kitty Hawk, now deployed at the US naval base in Yokosuka, Kanagawa Prefecture, but slated to be replaced in 2008, the chief cabinet secretary told a press conference.

"US-Japan Nuclear Aircraft Carrier Deployment?" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 1, 2004)

6. US-Japan Missile Defense

In order to better intercept ballistic missiles, it is essential that the country's new missile defense system, to be phased in starting in fiscal 2007, be operated not by Japan alone, but in tandem with the US. Missiles launched from the DPRK would take a mere 10 minutes to arrive at their targets in Japan. The strategy of sharing intelligence with the US came about from a statement made by Adm. Toru Ishikawa, chairman of the Joint Staff Council of the Self-Defense Forces. "US-Japan Missile Defense" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 30, 2004)

7. Japan Anti-Terrorism

The rising threat of terror attacks at home has opened up another front in Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's defense of his decision to send Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to Iraq. A source close to Koizumi said: "It used to be he only had to worry about terror attacks in Iraq. Those days are gone. If Japan is hit, Koizumi goes down."

"Japan Anti-Terrorism" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 2, 2004)

8. Japan-PRC Yasukuni Controversy

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi indicated that the PRC's anger over his visits to Yasukuni Shrine could fuel anti-Chinese sentiment in Japan and thus hurt bilateral ties. "I would not say this or that to other state leaders over their ways of paying homage to their war dead," the prime minister expressed.

"Japan-PRC Yasukuni Controversy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 2, 2004)

9. Japan Domestic Economy

Japan's unemployment rate stayed at 5 percent in February, the government said Tuesday, amid signs that a gradual recovery appears to be taking hold. Japan's economy has marked a rebound over the last year largely atop exports fueled by an upturn in the US and the rest of Asia.

"Japan Domestic Economy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 30, 2004)

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