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United States

1. US DPRK Policy Criticism

A leading Senate Democrat on Wednesday accused the administration of President George W. Bush of delaying serious talks with the DPRK on its nuclear arms program. "The administration's inattention and ideological rigidity has left America less secure today than we were three years ago," Sen. Joseph Biden, the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said during a speech at an Arms Control Association Conference at Georgetown University. "It's time to get serious about negotiations," the Delaware Democrat said. "That does not mean paying blackmail."

"US DPRK Policy Criticism" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 29, 2004)

2. Non-State Nuclear Proliferation

As US and international officials trace the flow of nuclear weapons technology to Libya, Iran and other countries, they are uncovering new evidence that private individuals, rather than governments, have become key sources of nuclear parts and know-how. Diplomats and US investigators examining the Iranian and Libyan programs say that a nuclear black market has flourished beneath the radar of governments and international watchdogs, fed by scientists and engineers affiliated with Pakistan's nuclear arms program. Until now, most counter-proliferation measures -- including the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty -- have been focused on restricting the spread of weapons technology by states. A black market existing outside those controls presents a more complex problem, officials say.

"Non-State Nuclear Proliferation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 29, 2004)

3. US Missile Defense Spending

The Bush administration will ask Congress to boost spending on missile defense by \$1.2 billion next year and nearly double funding to modernize the Army in the \$401.7 billion US military budget for 2005, according to Pentagon documents released on Friday. The defense plan is part of a proposed \$2.3 trillion federal budget President Bush will send to lawmakers on Monday. It calls for a 7 percent increase in defense spending over the current level of \$375 billion. The administration seeks to boost funding for its controversial missile defense program by 13 percent to \$10.2 billion next year from \$9 billion requested for fiscal 2004. The new figure includes spending by the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency of \$9.1 billion in 2005, up from \$7.6 billion, as well as the Army's Patriot missile program.

"US Missile Defense Spending" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 30, 2004)

4. US-Russia Arms Talks

US Undersecretary of State John Bolton met with Russia's top nuclear official on Friday, his second day of talks on strengthening controls against the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Bolton and Atomic Energy Minister Alexander Rumyantsev discussed bilateral cooperation in the nuclear sphere, nonproliferation problems and "current issues of radioactive and nuclear safety in the world." Bolton was expected to discuss continuing US concerns over Russia's participation in construction of the Bushehr nuclear power plant in Iran.

"US-Russia Arms Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 30, 2004)

5. Op-Ed: Lewis on DPRK Visit

The main challenge now is to engage the DPRK and deal with our mutual fears and threats. Neither war nor a nuclearized DPRK 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.

"Op-Ed: Lewis on DPRK Visit" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 28, 2004)

Korean Peninsula

1. DPRK-US Multilateral Talks

US State Department's top East Asia hand James Kelly left for the region, in the latest stage of a 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.

"US-DPRK Multilateral Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 28, 2004)

2. ROK on DPRK Six-Way Talks

ROK's Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister Ban Ki-moon said Tuesday that advance agreement on a joint statement should not be mandatory for holding another round of six-nation talks on DPRK's nuclear weapons ambitions. Ban, speaking to reporters just before attending a weekly cabinet meeting at Chongwadae (ROK presidential offices), the presidential office, said the government was making efforts in cooperation with the US and other concerned countries to persuade the DPRK to come out for a fresh round of nuclear talks in February.

"ROK on DPRK Six-Way Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 27, 2004)

3. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Program

ROK defense ministry has urged the DPRK to disclose and destroy its nuclear weapons program but said there was little hope the DPRK would fully comply. Calling for stepped up surveillance of the DPRK, the ministry said the DPRK should follow the Libyan model and abandon its quest for nuclear weapons, but acknowledged that the regime of Kim Jong-Il was unlikely to do so.

"ROK on DPRK Nuclear Program" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 29, 2004)

4. DPRK-Nigerian Missile Deal

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.

"Libyan DPRK Missile Similarities" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 30, 2004)

5. ROK on DPRK-Nigerian Missile Deal

The ROK played down a DPRK offer to provide missile technology to Nigeria, saying Thursday it was a tactic to gain leverage ahead of a possible second round of talks on the DPRK's nuclear weapons programs. Kim Kisu, second secretary of the DPRK Embassy in Nigeria's capital of Abuja, later said no deal had been closed. ROK Unification Minister Jeong Se-hyun said it remained unclear whether Nigeria had accepted the offer, but he didn't think the issue would cause many problems.

"ROK on DPRK-Nigerian Missile Deal" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 29, 2004)

6. US on DPRK-Nigerian Missile Sale

The US said it was concerned about a proposed deal for the DPRK to sell Nigeria ballistic missiles and US officials hinted at the possibility of sanctions against the African nation. A US ally and key oil supplier, Nigeria announced this week it could soon sign an agreement with the DPRK. US officials doubted Nigeria, which faces no obvious military threat, would go ahead with a deal but said the government had so far failed to assure US diplomats it would reject the DPRK's offer. They said the US arsenal of tools to stop such deals include seizing arms in transit or imposing sanctions.

"US on DPRK-Nigerian Missile Sale" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 30, 2004)

7. ROK Nuclear Submarine Development

The ROK Defense Ministry yesterday denied a media report that the government was mulling the deployment in 2012 of several 4,000-ton nuclear-powered submarines. Won Jang-hwan, the ministry's chief arms procurement officer, said the ministry was studying through 2005 the feasibility of developing 3,500-ton submarines at a cost of 1.7 billion won (\$1.54 million). But he said the submarines' method of power had yet to be decided. Won also said ROK was not expected to develop nuclear-powered submarines independently, as the US has.

"ROK Nuclear Submarine Development" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 27, 2004)

8. ROK Domestic Politics Shake-Up

ROK President Roh Moo-Hyun has replaced his top defense and national security advisors in a cabinet shake-up that comes at a pivotal point in efforts to end the DPRK nuclear crisis. The former deputy head of the National Intelligence Service, Kwon Chin-Ho, will take over from Ra Jong-Yil as national security advisor, presidential spokesman Yoon Tai-Young said. And Yoon Kwang-Ung, a retired admiral, will succeed Kim Hee-Sang as adviser for national defense, Yoon said. Some analysts linked the new shake-up to an effort to reduce pro-US influence in Roh's inner circle but officials said Ra's exit from the cabinet-level post would not affect policy.

"ROK Domestic Politics Shake-Up" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 30, 2004)

9. ROK Political Corruption

Prosecutors confirmed Friday that Han Hwa-gap, the former chairman of the Millennium Democratic Party (MDP), approached the SK group to demand political funds, and illegally accepting W400 million during the 2002 presidential campaign. Han is also suspected of taking W650 million in bribes from a construction company ahead of the election for party chairman held in April 2002. According to the prosecutors, the former MDP chairman received W600 million through Rep. Kim Won-gil, who was serving as the head of the party's campaign committee, and W50 million directly from the company president.

"ROK Political Corruption" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 30, 2004)

10. ROK Political Reform

The ROK's opposition leader hinted Saturday at a constitutional amendment to push ahead with political reforms after April's parliamentary election is over. "For a less costly elections, a fundamental change (in the Constitution) is necessary," said Choi Byung-ryol, head of the main opposition Grand National Party, in a breakfast meeting with party members in South Gyeongsang Province. It was the first time Choi mentioned the constitutional change this year, after tossing the idea about late last year. However, the party's spokesman, Park Jin, played down Choi's remark.

"ROK Political Reform" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 26, 2004)

11. ROK US Army Yongsan Base Relocation

Defense Minister Cho Young-kil said on Tuesday that the ROK and the US have negotiated the costs of relocating the US Army's Yongsan base at US\$3 billion to US\$4 billion, and were expected to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) during their seventh meeting, in mid-February. Even after signing the MOU, the ROK would try to lower the costs, the minister added.

"ROK US Army Yongsan Base Relocation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 27, 2004)

12. Inter-Korean Talks

DPRK officials expressed hope for progress at cabinet-level inter-Korean talks slated for next month here, according to the official paper of a pro-Pyongyang body in Japan on Tuesday. "If delegates from both sides approach the talks from the standpoint of the June 15 Joint Declaration, we can bear good fruit," the Choson Sinbo quoted an unidentified official of the DPRK's National Reconciliation Council as saying. The discussions, scheduled for February 3-6, are the highest-level channel of dialogue between the ROK and the DPRK and would be the 13th since the summit.

"Inter-Korean Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 27, 2004)

13. Inter-Korean Relations

The ROK and the DPRK have reached an agreement on guaranteeing the security of the ROK who cross the heavily fortified inter-Korean border for either business or tourism, a senior ROK official said Thursday. It is the first time authorities from the two Koreas have signed the deal, which pertains to South Koreans visiting either an industrial complex being built by South Korea in the DPRK's border town of Kaesong. The accord, reached at the end of three days of talks in Kaesong, would ensure South Koreans are not investigated and prosecuted unilaterally in the DPRK, Jo said.

"Inter-Korean Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 29, 2004)

14. DPRK Humanitarian Aid Cuts

The DPRK will face a severe cut in donated cereal rations in February and March, the World Food Program said in an emergency report dated last week. The United Nations relief agency said it would be forced to end food provision to all but 80,000 pregnant and nursing women and young children in day care centers. The expected arrival of corn and wheat from international donors in March and April would allow the agency to resume temporarily its food aid to other "core beneficiary groups," the report said, but 1 million North Koreans would not receive any grain rations in April and May. The number of North Koreans cut off from those rations would grow to 1.7 million in June and to 2.5 million in July, the UN agency forecast. The agency wants \$171 million from international donors in 2004.

"DPRK Humanitarian Aid Cuts" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 26, 2004)

15. DPRK Defector Radio Broadcasting

DPRK defectors will set up an Internet radio broadcasting station "Free North Korea Broadcasting"

("DPRK Defector Radio Broadcasting" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 30, 2004)

People's Republic of China

1. PRC-US Talks on DPRK Multilateral Talks

A top US diplomat praised the PRC on Friday for its efforts to reconvene negotiations about the DPRK's nuclear program and expressed hope a new round of six-party talks could be held soon. But after a day of meeting with PRC leaders, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage wouldn't cite a potential date for the talks. An Australian government delegation was on its way to the DPRK on Friday to persuade the DPRK to agree to a second round, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said.

"US-PRC Talks on DPRK Multilateral Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 30, 2004)

2. PRC and US Differences on DPRK Nuclear Freeze Offer

The US and the PRC are in dispute over the DPRK's offer to freeze its nuclear activities as part of a solution to its nuclear standoff with the US, making the outlook of a second round of six-party talks bleak. The US insists the DPRK's proposal should include all nuclear activities, both before and after a 1994 US-DPRK accord, but the PRC maintains it should only cover those in the post-pact period. The DPRK wants economic assistance and regime security in specific terms in return for its offer to freeze its nuclear program at the next six-way talks.

"PRC and US Differences on DPRK Nuclear Freeze Offer" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 26, 2004)

3. France-PRC Relations

French President Jacques Chirac gave his full backing to the PRC against Taiwan by condemning a planned referendum by the island state as "irresponsible" and a threat to Asia, even as he extracted a promise from Beijing to respect human rights. The statements, enshrined in a joint declaration signed by Chirac and visiting PRC President Hu Jintao, came as France sought to boost its trade with the PRC. Chirac, speaking at a media conference with Hu, hailed what he said was a new era in French-PRC relations, and called the declaration, which reinforced a 1997 partnership pact, a "road map" for developing future ties.

"France-PRC Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 27, 2004)

4. US on France-PRC Arms Embargo

The US took a dim view of French President Jacques Chirac's call for an end to a European Union embargo on arms sales to Beijing, in the latest sign of frosty ties between Paris and Washington. Chirac gave the undertaking during talks with PRC President Hu Jintao in Paris, saying the embargo, slapped on the PRC after the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre "makes no more sense today." The State Department said it viewed bans on arms sales to the PRC by the US and EU as complimentary, and did not agree they should be lifted.

"US on France-PRC Arms Embargo" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 29, 2004)

5. Taiwan-France Relations in Response to PRC

Taiwan has cancelled planned visits to France by two cabinet officials to protest at French President Jacques Chirac's open criticism of the island's referendum plan. To protest against Chirac's siding with the PRC, Cultural Affairs Minister Tchen Yu-chiou and Science Minister Wei Che-ho had called off plans to visit Paris in early February. "We will suspend the exchange programs until there is a proper reaction from France," Premier Yu Shyi-kun told reporters.

"Taiwan-France Relations in Response to PRC" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 29, 2004)

6. PRC-Egypt Relations and the Middle East

PRC President Hu Jintao began talks with his Egyptian counterpart Hosni Mubarak on Iraq and the Arab-Israeli conflict as the two sides broadened economic ties, officials said. Hu, on his first visit to Egypt since becoming head of state last March, arrived from Paris where the French government stirred controversy with its support for Beijing's opposition to a referendum in Taiwan. Egypt's official MENA news agency said Mubarak and Hu discussed "the situation in the Middle East, especially the (Arab-Israeli) peace process, the situation in Iraq, and how to improve bilateral cooperation." It gave no other details of the talks which were being held at Mubarak's palace in northern Cairo. MENA said that officials traveling with Hu and their Egyptian counterparts signed several cooperation agreements, including on technology and oil exploration in Egypt. The PRC's ambassador to Cairo, Wu Sike, has said the visit would focus on strengthening bilateral and economic links and would also review changes in the Middle East over the past four years. "China is ready to transfer to Egypt its technology in all fields, without restriction," especially in telecommunications and aeronautics, Wu said. But he added that the PRC delegation included no military representative.

"PRC-Egypt Relations and the Middle East" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 29, 2004)

7. PRC Denies Role in Bird Flu

The PRC has denied allegations it was the source of the bird flu outbreak which has hit 10 Asian nations, as Indonesia caved in to pressure for a mass cull of millions of infected chickens. The PRC became the latest Asian government to face charges of covering up the disease when the respected New Scientist journal in Britain said the epidemic probably erupted there as early as a year ago.

"PRC Denies Role in Bird Flu" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 29, 2004)

Japan

1. Japan Iraq Troop Dispatch

Japan's ruling coalition pushed a bill through parliament's lower house to formally approve the dispatch of troops to Iraq in its first full military deployment to a combat zone since World War II. Japan on Monday ordered the dispatch of some 600 troops -- expected to be in place in March -- to provide humanitarian and reconstruction aid to Iraq. They are expected to leave next week. The bill can retroactively endorse or overrule this deployment. Several Japanese military contingents are already in Iraq or Kuwait on exploratory missions, and on Friday three air force cargo planes flew into Kuwait to beef up Japan's mission. A number of advance units from the Japanese defence forces have been operating in Iraq since late December

"Japan Iraq Troop Dispatch" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 30, 2004)

2. Japan Anti-Iraq Troop Deployment Rallies

Nearly 4,000 people staged a rally against sending Japanese troops to Iraq, as Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi is set to give the final go-ahead for the dispatch of the core group of ground troops. Demonstrators flocked to Hibiya Park near Tokyo's Imperial Palace, carrying banners which read: "Stop sending the Self-Defense Forces to Iraq. We don't need a war." Rei Shiba, an organizer of the rally, said: "A majority of Japanese oppose the dispatch, while the constitution bans us from sending troops, and then Prime Minister Koizumi ignores the facts. I doubt democracy in Japan works well."

"Japan Anti-Iraq Troop Deployment Rallies" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 26, 2004)

3. Japan Lower House on DPRK Economic Sanctions Bill

Japan's lower house of parliament has approved a bill that will make it easier to block cash remittances to the DPRK "The bill passed and was sent to the upper house," said a spokeswoman for the lower house. "It was approved by the members of both ruling and opposition parties, except for the Communist Party." The bill amends the Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Control Law to enable the authorities to stop cash remittances when they feel it is justified.

"Japan Lower House on DPRK Economic Sanctions Bill" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 29, 2004)

4. Japan Nuclear Fusion Project

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.

"Japan Nuclear Fusion Project" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 28, 2004)

5. US on Japan Nuclear Fusion Project

The US "could change" its support for Japan's bid to host a massive nuclear fusion project if technical criteria work in favor of a rival French site, President George W. Bush's scientific advisor said. John Marburger said that the support voiced by Washington for the northern Japanese village of Rokkasho-mura was based on a preliminary assessment of the site by the US Department of Energy.

"US on Japan Nuclear Fusion Project" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 29, 2004)

6. Japan Economic Status

Japan's industrial output in December fell 1.0 percent from November but for 2003 was up 3.2 percent, the first such rise in three years as the economy remains on track for an export-driven recovery. The trade ministry said the December downturn was a temporary dip, reflecting statistical factors in changes in general machinery orders. The December outcome reflected lower output in general machinery and metal products while electronics parts and IT products continued higher in the month, the ministry said Thursday.

"Japan Economic Status" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 29, 2004)

7. Japan Former Foreign Minister Death

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.

"Japan Former Foreign Minister Death" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 28, 2004)

8. Aum Guru Death Sentence

Tokyo District Court has sentenced a senior chemist in the Aum Supreme Truth doomsday cult, responsible for the 1995 sarin nerve-gas Tokyo subway attack which killed 12 people and for other crimes, to death. Masami Tsuchiya, 39, became the 11th Aum member to receive a death sentence in court of first instance.

"Aum Guru Death Sentence" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 30, 2004)

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