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United States

1. US Missile Defense

A missile was launched Saturday in a test of its flight performance and potential for use as part of a land-based defense system. The prototype, launched from a silo at Vandenberg Air Force Base, is designed to intercept limited long-range ballistic missiles. The Bush administration wants a missile defense system to include rockets based at Vandenberg. The launch did not test the missile's ability to intercept an incoming rocket. Maj. Stacey Bako said more tests are planned this fall in the Marshall Islands. The three-stage booster was designed by Orbital Sciences Corp.

"US Missile Defense" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 16, 2003, US)

2. US on DPRK-PRC Refugee Situation

The US is asking the PRC to allow the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to become involved in an "orderly process" that would allow DPRK asylum seekers who have fled to the PRC to leave for a third country, a senior US official said in an interview. US Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Lorne Craner made the comments in an interview with Kyodo News agency conducted Wednesday in Washington. "The point is that they (the PRC) have been willing to live with a lot of people coming in from North Korea," Kyodo quoted Craner as saying. "We would like them to go further and to have an orderly process for people who want to continue their journey." US diplomats, members of Congress and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees have long urged the PRC to do more to help the thousands of North Koreans fleeing the country. The PRC refuses to grant them asylum and often sends them back to the DPRK where they are usually punished harshly, often with torture and forced labor at prison camps. In July the US Senate approved legislation that would make it easier for some of the estimated 300,000 DPRK refugees hiding in the PRC after fleeing their homeland to resettle in the US.

"US on DPRK-PRC Refugee Situation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 24, 2003, US)

3. US-Asia Economic Growth

US Treasury Secretary John Snow will visit Japan, the PRC, and Thailand next month, seeking to prod Asia to boost growth and to discuss the yuan exchange rate, the government said.

"Achieving strong and vibrant global growth is one of the world's most pressing priorities," Snow said in a statement. "We live in an interdependent world economy where our fortunes are inextricably linked. Let me be clear: increased economic growth overseas equals more jobs here." Snow is to visit Tokyo September 1-2, Beijing from September 2-3 and Phuket, Thailand September 4-5 to meet with finance ministers of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum. In Japan, he planned to meet with top government and private policymakers, assessing the prospects for sustained economic growth, an anti-deflation battle and the effort to clean up bad loans in the banks.

"US-Asia Economic Growth" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 20, 2003, US)

4. US Navy Submarine Hunts

The Navy plans to begin testing a new method for hunting hostile submarines this fall off the coast of Japan, and the test will include looking for the real thing: diesel-electric DPRK and PRC subs prowling in the Sea of Japan. The Navy says the tests are not intended to be hostile and technically involve hunting only for submarines from allies such as Japan. But Navy officials acknowledge that the tests will also be watching for DPRK and PRC subs because they frequent the areas where the tests will take place. Defense officials say both nations' submarines pose threats that are getting more serious. "North Korea maintains one of the world's largest submarine forces," said a defense official who asked not to be named. The tests, as well as similar trials off Hawaii, are scheduled to begin in about two months. They are intended to try out the prototype of a detection device that analyzes underwater color patterns and detects color gradations too faint for the human eye to notice.

"US Navy Submarine Hunts" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 16, 2003, US)

Korean Peninsula

1. DPRK on Multi-lateral Talks

The DPRK accused the US of plotting to scupper next week's six-nation nuclear crisis talks in an attempt to force a settlement of the nuclear stand-off at the United Nations. The DPRK's government newspaper Minju Joson said unless Washington's "hostile policy" on Pyongyang changed, there would be no success at the three-day talks due to open in Beijing on August 27. "The US makes the breakdown of the six-party talks an established fact when the talks are yet to open, and sets forth its next action program," it said. It blasted as a "crazy claim" American statements that the issue could be taken to the UN Security Council if the multilateral talks end in failure. "This is an intolerable mockery of, and challenge to, the expectation of the international community which desires so ardently a positive settlement of the nuclear issue," it said.

"DPRK on US Role in Multi-lateral Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 24, 2003, US)

"DPRK Regional Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 16, 2003, US)

"DPRK Multilateral Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 16, 2003, Japan)

"US-DPRK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 16, 2003, Japan)

2. ROK Multi-lateral Talks Pessimism

ROK Foreign Minister Yoon Young-Kwan warned against expectations of a settlement at next week's six-way talks addressing the DPRK nuclear crisis. Yoon said finding a solution to the stand-off would be difficult at a single meeting, and said further rounds of negotiations were likely necessary before the crisis could be resolved. "It would be hard to resolve the problem through a few rounds of talks, given the nature of nuclear issues," Yoon said in a meeting with journalists from local and foreign media. "It is a correct view to say that a long process for settlement is now beginning, rather than being too optimistic or pessimistic about the outcomes of the first round of talks." "ROK Multi-lateral Talks Pessimism" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 20, 2003, US)

3. KEDO DPRK Reactor Project

An international consortium in charge of constructing two light-water nuclear reactors in North Korea is likely to decide to freeze the project next month, diplomatic sources said Tuesday. Executive board members of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization, including Japan, the US and South Korea, are likely to call off the construction work when they meet in late September, the sources said. Any decision to effectively abandon the KEDO project would be put off until after the six-nation talks in the PRC scheduled for Aug. 27 to 29, but the board members have determined it cannot be postponed indefinitely, the sources said. The sources said that among the KEDO board members, Japan and the US already agree that halting the project is inevitable and would be difficult to resume in the future even if the DPRK agrees to halt nuclear weapons development. "KEDO DPRK Reactor Project" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 20, 2003, US)

4. DPRK on US Nuclear Inspection Demand

The DPRK rejected a US-demanded early inspection of its nuclear facilities as "absolutely unacceptable," toughening its stance ahead of six-nation nuclear crisis talks. The statement by the DPRK's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) came as the ROK's Foreign Minister Yoon Young-Kwan warned against expectations of a settlement at next week's talks in Beijing. "The US demand for an early inspection of the DPRK (North Korea) nuclear facilities is absolutely unacceptable as it is a blatant interference in its internal affairs and an infringement upon its sovereignty," KCNA said. "This is little short of demanding the DPRK surrender to it. Surrender means death. The US call for an 'early inspection' of a sovereign state would only spark a conflict," KCNA added. "DPRK on US Nuclear Inspection Demand" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 20, 2003, US)

5. DPRK Economic Liberalization

The nuclear talks start against the economic backdrop that nearly 60 years of Communism and Kim family rule have left the DPRK rivaling Mongolia as Northeast Asia's poorest country. The ROK's per capita income of \$10,000 is 13 times that of North the DPRK's \$770. The ROK, once the poorer of the two Koreas, now exports in two days what the DPRK exports in a year. Over the last decade, the DPRK's exports have fallen to \$730 million, from \$1.7 billion. In the decade since the DPRK was cut adrift from Soviet subsidies, its per capita income has dropped in half, electricity shortages became chronic, and about 5 percent of the population starved to death. "DPRK Economic Liberalization" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 24, 2003, US)

6. ROK Domestic Politics

The ROK's Ministry of Finance and Economy reshuffled some of its director general posts today that included the appointment of a new public information officer. Kim Sung-jin, the director general of the ministry's Economic Cooperation Bureau, was the new chief spokesman, succeeding Lee Jung-hwan who moved to the Office of Government Policy Coordination. Lim Young-rok, a policy coordinator, took over the spokesman's old post at the cooperation bureau, while Cho In-kang, a secretary at presidential office Cheong Wa Dae, was made head of the economic free trade zone planning panel.

"ROK Domestic Politics" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 24, 2003, US)

7. DPRK-ROK World Student Games

Security was tightened around thousands of athletes at the World Student Games in the ROK after the national intelligence agency issued an alert that Islamic extremists could be planning an attack. Athletes from the US and Britain were in particular being given added protection, police said. "We have received an intelligence report from abroad that the Universiade in Daegu is included in the list of possible attack targets by Islamic extremist groups," a National Intelligence Service (NIS) spokesman said. "Consequently, we have alerted all related government agents to the danger so that they take all necessary measures to ensure security at the games," he said. He did not say when the alert had been issued. A spokesman for the US delegation said plans were in place to deal with any emergency. He said the team traveled with a security expert who had heard the report but had decided not to take any extra precautions.

"DPRK-ROK World Student Games" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 24, 2003, US)

"DPRK-ROK World Student Games" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 20, 2003, US)

"ROK on Anti-DPRK Activism" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 16, 2003, US)

8. DPRK on Russian Naval Exercises

Days before six-power talks on its nuclear program, the DPRK has denounced naval exercises Russian forces are about to begin with three other participants in the conference, Russia's defense minister said on Wednesday. Itar-Tass news agency said minister Sergei Ivanov told a video conference with Russian navy chiefs that Pyongyang had turned down an offer to send observers to the Far Eastern maneuvers, saying they would lead to "a sharpening of the atmosphere on the Korean peninsula." Russia said its naval vessels would link up with US coastal forces in exercises in the Bering Straits and with Japanese and ROK forces for allied maneuvers in the Japan Sea, south of the Russian port of Nakhodka. Tass said up to 70,000 Russian military and civilian personnel as well as 60 vessels and 35 support ships would take part in the exercises, the main phase of which was due to take place between August 22 and 27.

"DPRK on Russian Naval Exercises" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 20, 2003, US)

9. DPRK Japanese Abductees' Children Return

The DPRK has offered to return the children of five Japanese it abducted decades ago if Tokyo provides food aid and agrees that the abduction issue is closed, the regional daily Tokyo Shimbun said on Wednesday. Japan is pushing for the unconditional return of the offspring, who are now in their teens and twenties, the paper said, citing diplomatic sources. The DPRK admitted in September to the abduction of 13 Japanese in the 1970s and 1980s to help train spies. Five of the abductees returned to Japan last year after about a quarter of a century in the communist state, leaving behind seven children.

"DPRK Japanese Abductees' Children Return" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 20, 2003, US)

10. ROK Joint Labor Strike

The ROK's two leading union collectives launched a joint strike nationwide to press for better terms and conditions on the proposed shortened work week. The industrial action was joined by 42,000 workers, members of what is said to be the country's biggest Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU) and the second biggest Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU). FKTU and KCTU have forged a united front since the government sent its own bill on the shortened work week to the parliament for approval after failing to broker a labor-management deal. The rare one-day joint strike had a limited impact on the industry as big unions at Hyundai Motor and other large companies decided not to take part in the action. The umbrella union groups, who say the proposed government bill panders to management instead of meeting labor demands, were planning massive protest rallies before the parliament building in Seoul.

"ROK Joint Labor Strike" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 16, 2003, US)

People's Republic of China

1. PRC on DPRK Multilateral Talks

The PRC announced the line-up for next week's talks on the DPRK's nuclear program on Thursday, saying DPRK Deputy Foreign Minister Kim Yong-il would lead Pyongyang's negotiating team. The ROK Yonhap news agency said Kim was relatively junior among eight DPRK vice foreign ministers, but had worked closely with the PRC in arranging the six-party talks. His selection instead of a colleague better known to US officials, the agency added, could signal Pyongyang's intention to coordinate its stance with its traditional ally the PRC. The PRC's Foreign Ministry said US Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly would represent Washington while Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Beijing's point man on the DPRK, would lead the PRC delegation. Russia's envoy would be Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Losyukov, Japan's would be Foreign Ministry official Mitoji Yabunaka and the ROK's Deputy Foreign Minister Lee Soo-hyuck, spokesman Kong Quan state.

"PRC on DPRK Multilateral Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 24, 2003, US)

2. PRC-Japan Mustard Gas Incident

The PRC issued its strongest complaint yet about drums of mustard gas abandoned by the Japanese in World War II, vowing Friday that it will not tolerate the "cancer" that has killed one man and sickened dozens of others. PRC Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi summoned Japanese Ambassador Koreshige Anamia to make an "urgent protest," the PRC Foreign Ministry said on its Web site. "This situation has developed to such degree that the Japanese government has a responsibility it cannot shirk," Wang was quoted as saying. "Even today, 58 years later, this cancer is constantly threatening the safety of PRC people's lives. It makes the PRC people furious." Li Guizhen, a migrant worker, was among 34 people who took ill after being exposed to the gas that leaked from the barrels of chemical weapons in the northeastern city of Qiqihar, the official Xinhua News Agency said. Li died Thursday night at a military hospital in Qiqihar.

"PRC-Japan Mustard Gas Incident" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 25, 2003, US)

"PRC-Japan Mustard Gas" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 20, 2003, US)

"PRC Mustard Gas Crisis" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 16, 2003, US)

3. US on PRC Human Rights

The US accused the PRC of "backsliding" on its commitments to improve its human rights record, as a perennial feud flared up to test improving US-PRC relations. Arrests of political activists and prison terms meted out to internet essayists factored into the unflattering State Department assessment, which came at a critical point in US-PRC relations with Beijing poised to hold six-nation DPRK crisis talks next week. "We have made (it) clear during the course of the year that there has been backsliding," said State Department spokesman Richard Boucher. "Unfortunately that pattern has continued. "Despite the progress in 2002 we've been disappointed to see the negative developments in 2003," he said, adding that Washington was dismayed at Beijing's response to promises made at a US-PRC human rights talks last year.

"US on PRC Human Rights" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 25, 2003, US)

4. Australia on PRC Human Rights

Australian Prime Minister John Howard said today he was satisfied with the PRC's human rights dialogue. He discussed the issue with Premier Wen Jiabao during his short trip to Beijing. "Both of us expressed satisfaction with the human rights dialogue," Howard told reporters. "We both thought it's superior to what used to happen before when Australia joined generic statements about human rights that didn't appear to have any impact. "We think we've made more headway on this issue. And the premier indicated to me towards the end of the discussion that he would like to keep the momentum of that human rights dialogue going."

"Australia on PRC Human Rights" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 16, 2003, US)

5. PRC-Australia Relations

PRC President Hu Jintao will visit Australia before the end of the year, demonstrating the importance the PRC attaches to ties with the country, Prime Minister John Howard said. Howard made the announcement of Hu's visit in Beijing after meeting with him, Premier Wen Jiabao and former president and now chairman of the military commission Jiang Zemin. "I can announce that President Hu Jintao will visit Australia later this year," he told reporters. "I am delighted that he has accepted my invitation. "This is a very important symbol of how important the PRC regard the relationship and how important we regard it." "PRC-Australia Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 16, 2003, US)

6. WHO PRC SARS Training

The World Health Organization (WHO) said it would train thousands of medical workers in the PRC as fears linger the SARS virus may return later this year once cold weather sets in. The training program is meant to make health workers better equipped to prevent infectious diseases from spreading in hospitals, said Alan Schnur, a WHO communicable diseases expert. The first part of the training program will be in Beijing, where 193 people died from the epidemic earlier this year, and will gradually be expanded to other parts of the PRC. Although the PRC has formally declared victory over SARS and the last patients have been discharged from hospital, many in the world's most populous country remain wary that the epidemic could bounce back. A survey made public this week suggested 30 percent of all urban PRC were worried SARS might return later this year.

"WHO PRC SARS Training" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 24, 2003, US)

"PRC SARS Public Fears" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 20, 2003, US)

7. PRC AIDS Arrest

A leading health official in the PRC's AIDS-stricken Henan province has been arrested, allegedly for leaking secret documents on the infection of tens of thousands of villagers through blood transfusions, an AIDS activist revealed. Ma Shiwen, deputy director of the Henan Center for Disease Control (CDC), was arrested for leaking documents on the Henan epidemic to the non-governmental AIDS activist organization Aizhi Action Group, according to the group's director, Wan Yanhai. "According to health officials in Henan, Ma Shiwen was arrested in recent days and is being charged with leaking state secrets," Wan told AFP from the US, where he is a visiting scholar. "It's possible that the secrets leaked concerned official documents that were anonymously sent to Aizhi Action Group on August 24 last year and which revealed the extent of the AIDS outbreak in Henan," Wan said Tuesday. Wan was himself detained and charged with leaking state secrets days after he received the documents and posted them on his group's website. He was released a month later following a huge international outcry and after police confirmed that the documents were anonymously sent to the AIDS group.

"PRC AIDS Arrest" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 20, 2003, US)

8. PRC Super ID Card

For almost two decades, PRC citizens have been defined, judged and, in some cases, constrained by their all-purpose national identification card, a laminated document the size of a driver's license. But starting next year, they will face something new and breathtaking in scale: an electronic card that will store that vital information for all 960 million eligible citizens on chips that the authorities anywhere can access. Officials hope that the technologically advanced cards will help stamp out fraud and counterfeiting involving the current cards, protecting millions of people from those problems and saving billions of dollars. Providing the cards to everyone is expected to take five or six years. But the vagueness and vastness of the undertaking has prompted some criticism that the data collection could be used to quash dissent and to infringe on privacy.

"PRC Super ID Card" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 16, 2003, US)

Japan

1. Japan on US Nuclear Deterrence

Japan has requested the US not to exclude the possibility of using nuclear weapons against the DPRK even if the DPRK pledges to give up its nuclear weapons program during the forthcoming multi-party talks, a Japanese newspaper reported on Friday. Mitoji Yabunaka, head of the Japanese Foreign Ministry's Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau, made the request to US Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly during trilateral policy talks held last week in Washington, Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper said quoting Japanese government sources. Tokyo fears that Japan might not be under the protection of the US nuclear umbrella if the DPRK attacks Japan after it obtains security guarantees from the US, the newspaper said.

"Japan on US Nuclear Deterrence" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 25, 2003, US)

2. Japan-DPRK Abduction Issue

Crucial talks between six nations next week in Beijing aim to focus on the DPRK's suspected nuclear weapons program. But Japan is unique in bringing another, highly emotional agenda to the table: the abduction of its citizens by DPRK spies in the 1970s and 1980s. Japan's chief negotiator said Wednesday that Tokyo wants the talks to press the DPRK on this issue, but the DPRK says bringing up the kidnappings would disrupt sensitive negotiations that took intense diplomatic pressure by the US to cobble together. The Japanese Foreign Ministry official in charge of the negotiations said the concerns about nuclear weapons, missile development and abductions must be solved together in a "comprehensive" manner. "We are talking about comprehensive resolutions," Mitoji Yabunaka said in an interview with The Associated Press. "It is our policy."

"Japan-DPRK Abduction Issue" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 20, 2003, US)

3. Japan on DPRK Cargo Ships

Japan cleared all cargo bound for the DPRK aboard a ferry that had been suspected of smuggling missile parts and illicit funds, saying Friday that no irregularities were found in more than 60 tons of goods. About 30 customs officials in the northern Japanese port of Niigata spent Thursday and Friday inspecting cargo to be loaded on the Mangyongbong-92 after it glides into port on Monday amid high security. Customs inspector Kenichi Seki said his team "thoroughly" inspected the outbound cargo, and that "everything was OK." The cargo consisted mostly of clothes, food, appliances and even used automobiles, he said. The 60 tons of cargo had a total worth of roughly \$168,000, he said.

"Japan on DPRK Cargo Ships" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 25, 2003, US)

4. Japan Missile Defense

Prompted by worries over the DPRK, Japan's Defense Ministry is set to make a budget request of more than one billion dollars for the next fiscal year to introduce a missile defense system, media said on Friday. The ministry also plans to boost its air-to-surface attack capability by ordering a GPS guidance system from the US to convert its air force's existing bombs into "smart bombs," the Mainichi Shimbun said in its late edition. Japanese officials have repeatedly warned that their nation lacks the capability to defend itself from the DPRK, which launched a ballistic missile that passed over Japan in August 1998 and is thought to have built one or two atomic bombs. The Nihon Keizai Shimbun financial daily said the ministry is expected to make a budget request of some \$1.19 billion for the fiscal year starting next April, a large part of which would be for a new US-made missile defense system. The ministry wants to deploy the Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) missile system, an upgraded version of the PAC-2 system that Japan's air force already possesses.

"Japan Missile Defense" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 25, 2003, US)

5. Japan on Role of Troops in Iraq

The deployment of Japanese troops to Iraq appeared likely to be delayed after the defense minister said it would be "difficult" to go ahead this year because of the bombing of UN headquarters in Baghdad. Shigeru Ishiba, the director general of the Defense Agency, said late Wednesday the truck bombing had shown Japan's planned humanitarian mission would carry real dangers. He said this month's planned reconnaissance mission for the deployment - - the first time since World War II that Japanese troops would arrive in an active warzone -- would probably be delayed. "It will take considerable time to restore security there under this situation," Ishiba told reporters, responding to Tuesday's attack which left 24 people dead including UN envoy to Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello. "It may be possible this year, but it may be difficult (to do so) within the year," Ishiba said, responding to questions about the planned mission. The deployment of an expected 1,000 Japanese troops had been widely expected to take place as early as November. The reconnaissance mission had been expected to start this month.

"Japan on Role of Troops in Iraq" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 24, 2003, US)

"Japan's Roles in Iraqi Restruction" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 16, 2003, Japan)

6. Koizumi's Tour of European Countries

Before the wrap-up of tour of European countries, Koizumi is scheduled to meet with the leaders of Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic. "All three countries are important to Japan's relationship with the EU, with Germany having been in a leadership position and Poland and the Czech Republic about to become new members," Koizumi said last week. "Strengthening ties with those countries will in turn enhance Japan's relationship with the EU." Germany is a core member of the EU, while the Czech Republic and Poland are scheduled to gain membership to the union in May 2004. There are no major outstanding issues to be discussed during the visit.

"Koizumi's Tour of European Countries" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 16, 2003, Japan)

7. Yasukuni Shrine Issues

Perhaps mindful of the furor triggered by his visits to Yasukuni Shrine, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's policy manifesto for the Liberal Democratic Party presidential election will not include any mention of annual visits on Aug. 15, the anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II. Asked by reporters whether the Yasukuni issue would feature in the policy document, Koizumi replied: "That was settled two years ago. Upon consideration of different factors, I have decided to avoid Aug. 15. I already explained my reasons two years ago." The LDP presidential race is scheduled for late September. Prior to his election as party president in April 2001, Koizumi vowed he would visit Yasukuni Shrine each Aug. 15 "no matter what form of criticism I may face."

"Yasukuni Shrine Issues" (NAPSNet Daily Report, August 16, 2003, Japan)

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