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United States

1. US-Russia Nuclear Weapons Reduction Treaty

US President Bush and the Russian leader Vladimir V. Putin signed the Treaty of Moscow on May 24. A treaty in which both countries agree to cut their nuclear warheads by two thirds. Under the Treaty of Moscow, each country will reduce its arsenals to between 1,700 and 2,200 nuclear warheads by 2012. The two countries currently have about 6,000 warheads each. Bush arrived here Thursday night to be greeted by a brass band, a parade of flag-carrying, arm-swinging soldiers and a rebuke over remarks he made earlier about Russian aid to Iran's nuclear programs. It was the start of a three-day visit that both sides have cast as a final elegy to the cold war.

"US-Russia Nuclear Weapons Reduction Treaty" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 24, US)

"Russia-US Nuclear Agreement" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 21, US)

2. US role in DPRK Asylum Seekers

The US State Department admitted that an apparent plea for asylum by the five DPRK refugees arrested after trying to enter a Japanese consulate in the PRC had got lost in the system and was never seen by relevant officials. The appeal was contained in a letter faxed to the department by the Virginia-based Defense Forum Foundation. "The letter conveyed an e-mail message in English purporting to be from the five North Koreans who tried to enter the Japanese consulate in Shenyang," said State Department spokesman Philip Reeker. "The message stated that the family sought asylum in the United States. And unfortunately, the letter was not transmitted to relevant offices in the department that were handling this matter," he said. "It was an error. We certainly regret it."

"US role in DPRK Asylum Seekers" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 24, US)

Korean Peninsula

1. DPRK Asylum Seekers in ROK

The five DPRK refugees who caused a serious diplomatic row between the PRC and Japan arrived on May 24 in the ROK to an emotional welcome from relatives and supporters. Without identifying those who helped their asylum mission, the group thanked their helpers, mostly members of South Korean and foreign Christian groups. "First of all, I'd like to say thanks to God and to those who helped us come here," said one of the men, Kim Kwang-Chul. "We had bitter feelings because we were dragged out of the Japanese consulate compound by Chinese security authorities, but we've left all the bad feelings behind as we are now in South Korea," he said. Thirty-eight DPRK asylum seekers have been allowed to leave the PRC for the ROK since early March, all having sought asylum in foreign diplomatic missions.

"DPRK Asylum Seekers in ROK" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 24, US)

"North Korean Asylum Seekers" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 24, ROK)

"PRC-Japan Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 24, PRC)

"PRC-Japan DPRK Asylum Seekers" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 22, US)

"PRC-Japan DPRK Defectors" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 21, US)

"Different Approach to Asylum Seekers" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 21, ROK)

2. DPRK on US Label of Sponsor of Terrorism

The DPRK responded for the first time to the US' renewed labeling of the DPRK as a state sponsor of terrorism. The DPRK stated on Friday that it does not care about the "trite" US decision. The DPRK's foreign news outlet, Korean Central News Agency, reported that the DPRK's Foreign Ministry denounced the US decision, calling it "ridiculous." "It is a trite method employed by the U.S. for the pursuance of its 'big stick policy' to label those countries disobedient to it as terrorists," KCNA quoted an unidentified Foreign Ministry spokesman as saying. "The DPRK (North Korea) does not care whether the US lists it as a 'terrorism sponsor' or not, because nobody recognizes the label," the spokesman was further quoted as saying.

"DPRK on US Label of Sponsor of Terrorism" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 24, US)

"DPRK-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 24, ROK)

3. Russia-DPRK Relations

Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov told his DPRK counterpart Tuesday that Moscow is pleased that its relations with the DPRK have been developing "dynamically." The meeting with DPRK Foreign Minister Paek Nam Sun came two days before US President George W. Bush is due to arrive in Moscow. In Tuesday's talks, the ministers said that their countries are ready to fight international terrorism in accordance with UN declarations and solve international problems through diplomacy, a statement from the Russian Foreign Ministry said. The talks also focused on relations between the DPRK and the ROK, and Russia welcomed a planned visit by a US envoy to the DPRK to discuss the issue. Paek invited his Russian counterpart to visit the DPRK, and the invitation was accepted, the Foreign Ministry statement said.

"DPRK-Russia Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 24, ROK)

"Russia-DPRK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 21, US)

4. DPRK-ROK Relations

A group of 10 DPRK experts arrived in Seoul on May 19 to look over ROK airports and light-water nuclear reactors. During its six-day stay in the ROK, the report said, the DPRK delegation will visit Yangyang Airport, Gimhae International Airport and nuclear power plants in Uljin in North Gyeongsang Province. It reported that the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization was consulting with North Korea on opening a direct inter-Korean air route over the East Sea. The air route, if opened, will be used to transport workers and materials for the construction of nuclear reactors in the DPRK, said the report.

"DPRK-ROK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 24, PRC)

"DPRK-ROK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 21, US)

5. DPRK Humanitarian Crisis

The DPRK could plunge back into its deadly famine unless foreign donors urgently send it more food, a leading aid provider said. Grain supplies will run out in July while the autumn harvest will not come in until October, said Kathi Zellweger, who coordinates aid to the DPRK for the charity Caritas. The United Nations says donors have pledged only US\$23.5 million of the \$US258 million in supplies sought this year. Its World Food Program, the DPRK's biggest food supplier, has been forced to cut rations to some 1 million people. "Without food aid, the DPRK could easily slip back into famine," Zellweger said Tuesday. "We could be back to square one."

"DPRK Humanitarian Crisis" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 22, US)

6. Inter-Korean Family Reunions

On May 22, 300 elderly ROK citizens who have relatives in the DPRK converged in central Seoul to appeal for more reunions of family members who were separated by the war. The demonstrators, most of them in their 70s and 80s, also demanded the prompt establishment of a permanent meeting place so separated family members can meet on a regular basis. "We cannot die before we are reunited with our families!" chanted the demonstrators. "Let us die after we visit our hometowns!" The ROK has proposed building a permanent meeting place for separated family members near the border, but the DPRK has not accepted.

"Inter-Korean Family Reunions" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 22, US)

7. ROK Domestic Politics

ROK President Kim Dae-Jung vowed to see out his term in office despite the detention of his third son on accusations of taking more than US\$1.2 million dollars in bribes. The 76-year-old leader expressed his shame at seeing his son Kim Hong-Gul formally arrested and detained on Saturday night. Presidential spokeswoman Park Sun-Sook said in a statement: "It's very regrettable." A court issued a warrant on Saturday night to send Kim Hong-Gul to a detention center south of Seoul. He faces a jail term of up to five years if found guilty at trial. A verdict is expected before a presidential election is held in December.

"ROK Domestic Politics" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 21, US)

8. ROK's F-X Project

The ROK has bargained down the final price of its "F-X" project, the purchase of next-generation fighter jets, to US\$4.23 billion, getting a US\$239 million discount from the US aerospace company Boeing, the National Defense Ministry announced Monday. With the price cut and additional work to be performed by local subcontractors, the offset trade package will be worth US\$3.56 billion, or 84 percent of the procurement price. Boeing also agreed to guarantee a continuing supply of replacement components, since the service life of the US Air Force's F-15Es, the base unit of ROK's F-15Ks, will end by 2030.

"ROK's F-X Project" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 21, ROK)

9. DPRK Health and Food Survey

UNICEF and the World Food Program are working with the DPRK government to conduct a joint nutrition survey of children slated for September, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said in its April Situation Bulletin. According to the UN report, the most common ailments found among children in the DPRK are pneumonia, diarrhea and radical infections of the respiratory system. Midterm malnutrition stage is most prevalent, while it is also not rare to see extreme cases, and most people cannot afford any medical treatment.

"DPRK Health and Food Survey" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 21, ROK)

10. Opposition Party Leader's Policy with DPRK

Lee Hoi-chang, the presidential nominee of the Grand National Party, said Wednesday he would continue to engage with the DPRK if elected, but said he is wary of the differences in the two Koreas' respective visions of reunification. "I will seek to clarify Article Two of the South-North Joint Declaration regarding reunification," Lee said at a meeting with the Kwanhun Club, an association of senior ROK journalists.

"Opposition Party Leader's Policy with DPRK" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 24, ROK)

People's Republic of China

1. PRC and Japan on DPRK Asylum Seekers

Japan has not abandoned plans to interview the five DPRK asylum seekers who were granted safe passage to the ROK. "We have to do what needs to be done," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda told a press conference on Friday. "We will talk with the South Korean government." The PRC said on Thursday it took the wishes of the five DPRK asylum seekers into account when allowing them to fly to freedom to the ROK, and rejected suggestions that future asylum seekers would necessarily receive similar treatment.

"PRC and Japan on DPRK Asylum Seekers" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 24, US)

2. Taiwan on Taiwan-US Relations

Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian said on May 23 that present bilateral relations between Taiwan and the US are better since US President George W. Bush came to power in 2000 than they have been for the last 30 years. Chen made the remarks while giving a speech to welcome a 30-member delegation of the United States-based National Newspaper Association. Describing ties as in their best shape ever, Chen said the two countries are "inseparable democratic allies" and he thanked the US for its long-term support for Taiwan. "Taiwan on Taiwan-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 24, US)

3. PRC on India-Pakistan Conflict

The PRC called on India to resolve differences with Pakistan through dialogue and show restraint, state media reported. PRC Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan, in a phone call to his Indian counterpart, Jaswant Singh, said he hoped the Southeast Asian neighbors would de-escalate tensions between them as soon as possible. This would be in the basic interests of the two countries and also benefit peace and stability in South Asia, he said. "PRC on India-Pakistan Conflict" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 24, US)

4. PRC Gas Field Discovery

Researchers have discovered the PRC's biggest natural gas reserves to date in its northern region of Inner Mongolia, the government said Thursday. The field is believed to hold 602.5 billion cubic meters (21 trillion cubic feet) of gas, said Yan Qisheng, an official of the Ministry of Science and Technology. However, Yan said the discovery shouldn't affect the PRC's decision on a massive deal to be announced soon to supply imported gas. The new gas field was found in the Erdos region of Inner Mongolia in 1999, but its vast size wasn't known until recently, said Yan. Beijing should start receiving gas from the field within two years, she said. The field is expected to produce about 6.5 billion cubic meters (227 billion cubic feet) of gas a year.

"PRC Gas Field Discovery" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 24, US)

5. Cross-Straits Relations

Chen Yunlin, director of the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council of the ORC, reiterated on May 21 that although Fujian is hit by drought, the province has been ready to ship untreated or tap water to Taiwan's Jinmen (Quemoy), Mazu and Penghu islands. The PRC welcomes ships from Taiwan to come for water and is ready to send ships for supplying water to Taiwan, Chen said. "Cross-Straits Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 24, PRC)

6. PRC Position on Arms Control

The PRC hoped a new agreement on nuclear arms control between the US and Russia can follow the spirit of verifiability and non-reversibility, in which they should further reduce their arms and push forward the international process of arms control and disarmament. Tang made the remarks during a telephone talk with his Russian counterpart, Igor Ivanov, noting that the PRC maintains the international community should establish a new security concept based on mutual benefit, mutual trust, quality and cooperation.

"PRC Position on Arms Control" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 24, PRC)

7. Cross-Straits Relations

Taiwan shipping tycoon Chang Yung-fa, wants to step down as an adviser to President Chen Shui-bian, apparently to curry favor with the PRC. Chen announced on Sunday the reappointment of Chang, chairman of the giant Evergreen shipping group, as one of his senior advisers, but group spokesman Nieh Kuo-wei said on Tuesday that Chang has no plans to continue in that position. "He hopes to turn it down because he's extremely busy with the group's business and has no time to spare to attend to the senior adviser job," Nieh said.

"Cross-Straits Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 21, US)

8. Cross-Straits Economic Relations

The PRC has invited two Taiwan tycoons to the mainland to discuss opening direct trade, transport and postal links, blocked for more than half a century, an official from the PRC cabinet's Taiwan Affairs office said on Wednesday. Wang Yung-ching, head of Formosa Plastics and Kao Chin-yen, chairman of food group Uni-President, were invited by Chen Yunlin, director of the State Council's Taiwan Affairs Office, the official said. Taiwan's top policymaker on the PRC, Tsai Ing-wen, gave a cautious response, saying the government needs to take conflict of interest into account before considering whether to accept the PRC's invitation.

"Cross-Straits Economic Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 22, US)

9. Cross-Straits Economic Relations

Taiwan said that on Monday it had approved US\$166.6 million of investments in the PRC by local companies. The Investment Commission said in a statement that the latest round of approvals included a plan by electronic component maker Hon Hai Precision to invest an additional US\$23.8 million in its Beijing unit and US\$33.8 million in setting up a new company in Suzhou to make components and connectors. The commission also approved a project by Formosa Plastics, the island's largest private industrial conglomerate, to invest \$43 million in a new company to produce and market plastics products in the PRC. Taiwan investors have invested US\$60 billion into the PRC since the late 1980s.

"Cross-Straits Economic Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 21, US)

10. PRC Space Program

Training in secret, a dozen fighter pilots are getting ready to make history as the PRC's first astronauts. Two attended Russia's cosmonaut school. Little else is known about any of them. The PRC hasn't announced their names or a launch date. But with confidence growing after three test launches of empty spacecraft, foreign experts say the PRC's astronauts could carry its gold-starred red flag into space as early as this year. A manned launch would make the PRC only the third nation to send a human into space, after Russia and the US.

"PRC Space Program" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 21, US)

11. East Asia Oil Import Outlook

East Asian region excluding Japan is expected to be in a net importing position of about 410,000 barrels per day for oil products in 2005, a Japanese energy think tank said in a report released on Monday. The forecast in the report released by the Institute of Energy Economics Japan (IEEJ) is based on a scenario that the East Asian region will post annual average growth of 4.9 percent between 2000 and 2005. The East Asian region comprises the PRC, the ROK, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

"East Asia Oil Import Outlook" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 21, US)

12. ROK-Taiwan Flights

A Taiwanese charter flight carrying dozens of World Cup soccer fans flew to the ROK on Tuesday - the first flight of its kind since diplomatic relations and air links were cut a decade ago. The chartered Boeing 757 left Taipei on the 2 1/2-hour flight to Seoul, its organizer, Far Eastern Air Transport Corp. said in a statement. Many of the 172 passengers aboard were wearing soccer jerseys. It was the first of three flights that the Taiwanese company is to make during the World Cup, which runs from May 31 to June 30.

"ROK-Taiwan Flights" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 21, US)

Japan

1. Japan-Russia Molotov Incident

A Russian Coast Guard general and his wife were hospitalized with severe burns Wednesday following an emergency airlift to Japan after a molotov cocktail attack on a Russian-controlled Pacific island that lies north of Japan, officials said. Major General Vitaly Gamov, chief of the Russian Coast Guard on the island of Sakhalin, and his wife were admitted in critical condition to the Sapporo Medical College on the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido, hospital spokesman Naoki Shioya said. Investigators believe the attack may have been connected to Gamov's work. Gamov suffered burns on about 95 percent of his body and was "in shock," Shioya said. Japan said that all treatment costs will be borne by the Russian side.

"Japan-Russia Molotov Incident" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 22, US)

2. Japan-Taiwan Water Assistance

Japan's southernmost province of Okinawa has offered Taiwan tonnes of free water as it suffers its worst drought in years, the foreign ministry said here. Taiwan is considering the offer but wants to monitor water supply levels and rainfall this month before deciding whether to accept, a ministry spokeswoman Chang Siao-yueh stated. Authorities in Okinawa, the closest Japanese province to Taiwan, said Tuesday they could provide 3,000 tonnes (3,300 short tons) of water daily to Taiwan for two months, Chang said.

"Japan-Taiwan Water Assistance" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 21, US)

3. Japanese Domestic Politics

Approval of the Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's administration fell to 37 percent, dipping below the 40-percent mark for the first time since its inauguration in April 2001, a nationwide survey by the Asahi Shimbun shows. Support for the Koizumi Cabinet was down 5 points from the April 14-15 survey. Respondents disapproving of the Cabinet rose to 48 percent in the latest poll, from 40 percent in the previous survey. Asked to cite what they saw as the Cabinet's weak points, 24 percent chose diplomacy and defense, sharply higher from 9 percent in the previous poll and coming close to the top answer--the economy and unemployment--at 37 percent.

"Japanese Domestic Politics" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 21, Japan)

4. US Bases in Japan

Twenty-eight US nuclear-powered submarines have made calls at navy bases in Yokosuka, Sasebo, and in Okinawa since local governments in September stopped announcing the stopovers in advance. Information on the submarines, including the name and time of call, is usually communicated to the local governments and the Japan Coast Guard 24 hours in advance. The Japanese Transport Ministry, however, asked the three local governments on September 21 not to publicize the information. The US said submarines may become terrorist targets if their port calls are known in advance. The three local governments agreed. Sasebo Mayor Akira Mitsutake, however, asked the Japanese Foreign Ministry in February to lift the ban on advance announcements.

"US Bases in Japan" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 21, Japan)

Nuclear Issues

1. Related News and Analysis

Pakistan will conduct a series of tests of its nuclear capable surface- to-surface missiles from May 25 to 28. The US government has expressed its "disappointment" at the decision while India has dismissed the planned tests as "antics." According to a report in the New Scientist magazine at least 3 million people would be killed in a limited nuclear war between India and Pakistan. M.V. Ramana's essay in the Daily Times argues that "nuclear weapons are not to be relied on to keep the peace" between India and Pakistan.

"Related News and Analysis" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #19)

Afghanistan

1. Current Situation

There were reports of fighting between rival warlords and attempted attacks on coalition forces operating in Afghanistan. General John McColl, the British commander of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), has expressed concern that there will be an "increase in the level of terrorism" in the country. Sami Yousafzai reports that the Afghanistan's Interim government is under extreme pressure by the people of southern Afghan provinces to release arrested Taliban soldiers. Iranian state radio has claimed that the US forces are setting up a military base near Iran's eastern border.

"Current Situation" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #19)

India-Pakistan Tensions

1. News

Pakistan and India have moved dangerously close to a war. There are some indications, however, that the tensions might be easing slightly. Pakistan has recalled its peace keeping troops stationed in Sierra Leone, but it is not clear if the troops currently deployed along the Afghanistan border have been moved to the eastern front. In a bid to diffuse the situation, the US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage is due to leave for South Asia on July 4. Writing for Asia Times, Saleem Shahzad suggests that Indian troops are planning intense operations against militants groups in the Indian controlled Jammu and Kashmir. An Indian government official has threatened to stop the flow of river water into Pakistan. Thousands of people have reportedly fled from the border regions of Jammu and Kashmir. There have also been reports of a number of civilian casualties as a result of continuing cross-border shelling by the two armies.

"India-Pakistan Tensions" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #19)

2. Analysis

Zulfiqar Ahmad of the Nautilus Institute argues that religious fundamentalist groups on both sides of the India-Pakistan border stand to gain from another war. Writing for the daily Hindu, Kuldip Nayar underscores the urgent need to resolve the Kashmir issue while stating that India has "no policy on Kashmir." Sudhi Ranjan Sen's essay in the daily Hindustan Times suggests that jihadi groups may not be under President Musharraf's control anymore. V.R. Raghavan's essay states that by not defining its strategic goals India has "driven itself into an unenviable dilemma on going to war." An editorial in the daily Hindu argues that "it is clear that war is no option." C. Rammanohar Reddy's article in the daily Hindu states that the "twin notions of an `affordable war' and a `limited war' are oxymorons."

"Analysis" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #19)

3. Kashmir Situation

The senior All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) leader Abdul Gani Lone was shot dead in Srinagar by unidentified gunmen.

"Internal Situation" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #19)

Pakistan and India

1. Pakistan: Domestic Situation

In his report for the daily News, Kamran Khan suggests that "major Pakistani cities may soon witness more suicidal attacks against the westerners and key government personalities." Foreign embassies have started to pull out their staff. President Musharraf has reportedly approved new measures against the five banned extremist Islamic groups.

"Pakistan: Domestic Situation" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #19)

2. Campaign Against al-Qaeda

Pakistani security forces reportedly recovered six rockets from near a military base in Sindh that is being used by the US forces. Rumors are circulating in Pakistani dailies that US-British search operations in eastern Afghanistan are aimed at locating some missing members of the US Special Forces.

"Campaign Against al-Qaeda" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #19)

3. India: Domestic Situation

A two-part report in the daily Hindu examines the plight of women victims of the communal riots in Gujarat.

"India: Domestic Situation" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #19)

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