

NAPSNET Week in Review 25 December, 2003

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNET Week in Review 25 December, 2003", NAPSNet Weekly Report, December 25, 2003, <https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-weekly/napsnet-week-in-review-25-december-2003/>

United States

1. US on Multilateral Talks

Despite delays that have pushed any possibility of six-party talks with the DPRK to curtail its nuclear arms program into 2004, a senior US official said on Friday it was too early to say diplomatic efforts had failed. After months of intensive efforts, the US and its partners in negotiations over the DPRK's nuclear program acknowledged this week that they were unable to arrange a second round of talks for this month, pushing the next target date into the new year. The senior official, speaking with Reuters on condition of anonymity, was optimistic that a second round of talks would eventually be scheduled.

"US on Multilateral Talks" (NAPSnet Daily Report, December 23, United States)

2. US New DPRK Talks Envoy

The US State Department named a new special envoy for negotiations with the DPRK five days after he arrived in Beijing on his first official visit. Joseph DeTrani, who held talks with senior PRC officials last week, joined the department in November, said spokesman Richard Boucher. He will serve as special envoy for negotiations with North Korea and as US representative to the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation (KEDO), a consortium set up to implement a now suspended 1994 anti-nuclear pact with Pyongyang.

"US New DPRK Talks Envoy" (NAPSnet Daily Report, December 24, United States)

3. Libya on DPRK Nuclear Weapons

Libyan leader Moamer Kadhafi said that his government had taken "corrective" action in renouncing weapons of mass destruction and that nations such as the DPRK, Iran and Syria, suspected of having nuclear arms, should follow its lead. "In my opinion I should believe that they should follow the steps of Libya, take an example from Libya, so that they prevent any tragedy being inflicted upon their own people," Kadhafi said in an exclusive interview with CNN late Monday. Kadhafi reasoned that such a step would "tighten the noose around the Israelis, so they would expose their programs of" weapons of mass destruction. Libya on Friday took the world by surprise admitting after years of denial that it had weapons of mass destruction and vowing to renounce them. Kadhafi, however, stated that Libya did not possess nuclear, biological or chemical weapons.

"Libya on DPRK Nuclear Weapons" (NAPSnet Daily Report, December 24, United States)

4. Powell on US Diplomacy

This is another season of frustration for Secretary of State Colin L. Powell. As he enters the final year of President Bush's current term in office, while refusing to address the question of whether he would serve during a second term, Powell says, however, that he is more determined than ever to counter the perception that diplomacy in general - and his own role in particular - have been marginalized in an administration obsessed with war and terrorism. "When you have a story like the Iraq story, which so dominated everything for most of the year, the message of what we are trying to do could not overcome the daily news that was coming in," Powell said in a telephone interview. "I think there are a lot of things we've done that sometimes get missed in the rush of business. US strategy is widely accused of being unilateralist by design," Powell wrote. "It isn't. It is often accused of being imbalanced in favor of military methods. It isn't. It is frequently described as being obsessed with terrorism and hence biased toward preemptive war on a global scale. It most certainly is not."

"Powell on US Diplomacy" (NAPSnet Daily Report, December 24, United States)

Republic of Korea

1. ROK-DPRK-US on DPRK Multilateral Talks

Japan, the US and the ROK have agreed to abandon drawing up an advance draft joint statement that would clarify the DPRK's obligation to end its nuclear weapons program, it has been reported. The three countries arrived at the agreement in their efforts to facilitate the holding of the second round of six-way talks in mid-January, said the Daily Yomiuri, the English version of the Yomiuri Shimbun. The talks have been delayed until next year because Japan, the ROK and the US failed to reach an agreement with the DPRK over arrangements for a joint statement proposal under the PRC's mediation.

"ROK-DPRK-US on DPRK Multilateral Talks" (NAPSnet Daily Report, December 22, Republic of Korea)

2. ROK on Iraq Troop Dispatch

ROK President Roh Moo-Hyun's cabinet was set to present a motion on the dispatch of 3,000 troops to Iraq after a phone conversation between Roh and US President George W. Bush.

"Following its cabinet deliberation today, the motion will be signed by President Roh and sent to the parliament for approval," presidential spokesman Yoon Tae-Young said on Tuesday.

The cabinet meeting followed an 18-minute phone conversation late Monday in which Bush thanked Roh for the ROK's decision to send around 3,000 new troops to Iraq at Washington's request to help rebuild the war-torn state.

"ROK on Iraq Troop Dispatch" (NAPSnet Daily Report, December 23, United States)

3. US on DPRK Trafficking

At least 50 documented incidents in more than 20 countries since 1976 link the DPRK to drug trafficking, with many of them involving the arrest or detention of DPRK diplomats, according to a congressional research report Thursday. The US State Department has consistently been cautious to designate the DPRK as a "state sponsor" of drug trafficking because this would arguably require the imposition of foreign aid sanctions on the DPRK, said the report titled "Drug Trafficking and North Korea: Issues for US Policy."

"US on DPRK Trafficking" (NAPSnet Daily Report, December 19, United States)

4. DPRK Military Technology Development

Computer technology has been given top priority in the DPRK, with the eldest son of the country's ruler leading the campaign to bring the military into the hi-tech age, a defector claims. Kim Jong-Il issued a special directive to elevate the information technology (IT) sector in the impoverished communist state to the level of strategic industry, said defector Tak Eun-Hyuk. DPRK-assembled computers have been provided to battalions of the 1.1-million-strong army. Each battalion currently has 15 computers and by the end of next year machines were expected to be provided to the level of army companies. The capacity of these computers is limited, however, and their use is confined to exchanging documents between command posts and military units and searching archives of Kim Jong-Il's directives and Communist Party dailies.

"DPRK Military Technology Development" (NAPSnet Daily Report, December 23, United States)

5. DPRK Kim Leadership Anniversary

The DPRK marked Kim Jong Il's anniversary as top military commander by vowing Tuesday to increase its readiness to fight a war with the US over its nuclear weapons program. Kim became supreme commander of the 1.1 million-strong Korean People's Army, the world's fifth largest, 12 years ago Wednesday. On the eve of the anniversary, military officers and communist party cadets gathered in Pyongyang and celebrated with anti-American bravado.

"DPRK Kim Leadership Anniversary" (NAPSnet Daily Report, December 23, United States)

6. DPRK - Iranian Relations

Iranian President Mohamad Hatami has said that his country is willing to further build up diplomatic ties with the DPRK, a DPRK radio station said Thursday. In a meeting with Kim Jong-nam, former DPRK ambassador to Iran, Hatami said the country will further expand relations with the communist state in such areas as politics, economy and culture, the DPRK Korean Central Broadcasting Station, monitored here, said.

"DPRK - Iranian Relations" (NAPSnet Daily Report, December 22, United States)

7. ROK Cabinet Restructuring

President Roh Moo-hyun will conduct a reshuffle and reorganize his Chong Wa Dae staff early next week, with the reshuffle affecting three to six Cabinet ministers, a presidential aides said on Friday. "The reshuffles are intended to allow them to run for the general elections slated for April next year as well as to inject vigor into the administration," said a senior presidential aide. The Chong Wa Dae reorganization will also see some presidential secretaries leave the presidential office for the April Assembly elections. The Cabinet reshuffle was originally slated to take place after the next year's budget bill is passed through the National Assembly.

"ROK Cabinet Restructuring" (NAPSnet Daily Report, December 22, United States)

People's Republic of China

1. PRC on Taiwanese Spy Ring

The PRC said Wednesday it has broken up a ring that spied for rival Taiwan and that 24 Taiwanese and 19 PRC have been captured and confessed. The announcement, reported by the official Xinhua News Agency, didn't identify those detained or say what they were accused of doing for Taiwan, the self-ruling island that Beijing claims as its territory. Taiwan's government already had denied that its agents were arrested after the story appeared this week in a Hong Kong newspaper. On Wednesday, Taiwan's Vice President Annette Lu dismissed the Xinhua report as an attempt to embarrass President Chen Shui-bian ahead of the island's March 20 presidential election.

"PRC on Taiwanese Spy Ring" (NAPSnet Daily Report, December 23, United States)

2. Taiwan on PRC Espionage Arrests

Taiwan dismissed reports that PRC authorities had uncovered a Taiwanese spy ring operating on the mainland, saying the news was a ploy by Beijing to influence upcoming presidential elections on the island. "We must unite together and not be deceived by rumors, because, as we all know, Beijing authorities have a great deal of tactics designed to disturb this election," Vice President Annette Lu told reporters. "In my opinion, the so-called Taiwanese spy case is no more than a smokescreen they threw up on purpose to confuse the Taiwanese people," she added.

"Taiwan on PRC Espionage Arrests" (NAPSnet Daily Report, December 24, United States)

3. Taiwan on PRC Relations

Taiwan sought to reassure the US Tuesday that a planned referendum coinciding with the presidential election in March was not aimed at upsetting the status quo with the PRC. President Bush told Beijing this month the US opposed any unilateral decision by either the PRC or Taiwan to change the status quo. It was seen as a blunt warning against Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian's referendum plan. "We want the world, especially the US, to know we favor peace and stability in the region," Taiwan Foreign Minister Eugene Chien told a news conference. "The referendum is not aimed at provoking the opposite side or changing the status quo."

"Taiwan on PRC Relations" (NAPSnet Daily Report, December 22, United States)

4. PRC-US on Taiwan and the DPRK

US President George W. Bush swapped views with the PRC's President Hu Jintao on ending the DPRK nuclear crisis, in a telephone call which also touched on mainland tensions over Taiwan, the White House said. Bush also eased the path for his Iraq debt envoy James Baker who arrives in Beijing on December 30, after visits to the ROK and Japan, Bush spokesman Scott McClellan said. Hu and Bush "discussed steps on the six-party talks on the DPRK's weapons program," McClellan said.

"PRC-US on Taiwan and the DPRK" (NAPSnet Daily Report, December 20, United States)

5. Taiwan Early-Warning Missile System

Taiwan's defense officials are locked in debate over selecting an early-warning system to guard against a possible missile attack by the PRC, according to a report to be published this week. US defense suppliers Lockheed Martin and Raytheon are slugging it out for the multi-million dollar contract, the authoritative Jane's Missiles and Rockets weekly will say in its Thursday edition. "Both companies are making claims that are not realistic -- squabbling over which radar could see a butterfly flying along in Fujian Province," a US Pentagon official said. "Both companies are saying things like, 'Our radar can do 90 percent of the job for just 10 percent of the costs of the other guy.' It's just ridiculous."

"Taiwan Early-Warning Missile System" (NAPSnet Daily Report, December 19, United States)

6. US - PRC Trade Relations

The PRC is falling well short in lowering trade barriers and putting in place reforms promised when it joined the World Trade Organization, the Bush administration said Thursday. The PRC generally got low marks for compliance with its WTO commitments, according to an annual assessment required under the law that cleared the way for the PRC's membership in the trade group. The administration said the PRC's effort "lost a significant amount of momentum in the past year," noting major problems in agriculture, services, enforcement of intellectual property rights and transparency of government regulations.

"US - PRC Trade Relations" (NAPSnet Daily Report, December 19, United States)

Japan

1. Japan-US Security Ties

Japan has strengthened its security ties with the US as it faces up to the DPRK nuclear threat with a double decision to buy its ally's missile defense system and send troops to Iraq, analysts say. The PRC has warned that both steps announced on Friday could lead a Japanese military revival and disrupt the world's strategic balance. Despite widely-criticized flaws in the missile defense system, designed to shoot down ballistic missiles from the DPRK or elsewhere, it is seen as a major step forward for Japan to protect itself in the long-term. The PRC's Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan has told his Japanese counterpart Shigeru Ishiba that the MD disrupts the strategic balance in the world and "might promote an arms race."

"Japan-US Security Ties" (NAPSnet Daily Report, December 19, Japan)

2. Japan on Missile Defense

Japan announced Friday that it will begin building a missile defense system - the first step of long-discussed plans to protect the country amid concerns over the threat from neighboring DPRK. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's Cabinet and his top security advisers approved the project, citing "a spread of missiles and a rise in weapons of mass destruction," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda said in a statement. "Ballistic missile defense is a purely defensive - and the sole - means of protecting the lives of our country's people and their property against a ballistic missile attack," the statement said. Japan has studied the technology for missile defense with the US, but until now it has only mulled plans to build such a system. Fukuda did not explain details of the program.

"Japan on Missile Defense" (NAPSnet Daily Report, December 19, United States)

3. Japan Troop Dispatch

Japan that Defense Agency Director General Shigeru Ishiba ordered on Friday the dispatch of an advance Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) team to Iraq, marking the first time since World War II that Japan will send troops to a country where fighting is taking place. Ishiba also ordered the ASDF, the Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) and the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) to prepare for the dispatch of their core units to Iraq where they will assist in reconstruction efforts. "I issued orders (for preparation) to the ground, maritime and air" divisions of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF), Ishiba told a press conference.

"Japan Troop Dispatch" (NAPSnet Daily Report, December 18, United States)

4. Japan on Iraqi Gas Fields

A consortium led by Japanese trading house Mitsubishi Corp. is considering bidding for a gas development project in Iraq, a member of the group says. "We are raising our hands, expecting that there will be such an opportunity" to develop gas fields in the post-war Iraq, said a spokesman for Japanese trading house Marubeni Corp., a member of the consortium. "We are at the very initial stage of discussions," he said, without elaborating further. A news report Friday said the consortium will group nine Japanese firms and KBR, subsidiary of Halliburton, the American energy services group formerly led by US Vice President Dick Cheney. A Mitsubishi Corp. spokesman said he was unable to confirm or deny the report.

"Japan on Iraqi Gas Fields" (NAPSnet Daily Report, December 19, United States)

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