



NAPSNET Week in Review 26 March, 2004

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United States

1. US Vice President Asia Tour

US Vice President Dick Cheney intends to visit Japan, South Korea and China next month to discuss the DPRK's nuclear weapons program, the war in Iraq and trade policy.

"US Vice President Asia Tour" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 25, 2004)

2. UN Resolution on Weapons Proliferation

The Bush administration presented the U.N. Security Council on Wednesday with a draft resolution that would outlaw the transfer of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons to terrorists and mercenary organizations. The move comes nearly six months after President Bush appealed to the U.N. General Assembly to adopt a resolution that would "criminalize the proliferation of weapons."

"UN Resolution on Weapons Proliferation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 25, 2004)

Korean Peninsula

1. DPRK on Next Round of Six-Way Talks

The DPRK is willing to stay in six-nation talks aimed at resolving a standoff over its nuclear weapons drive despite its cancellation of inter-Korean meetings, the ROK's foreign minister said. However, former US State Department official Charles Pritchard reported that the DPRK may skip the next round of international negotiations on its nuclear program due to the possibility that a new US administration - which could go easier on the DPRK- may win the November presidential election, an expert said Wednesday.

"DPRK on Third Round of Multilateral Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 26, 2004)

"DPRK on Next Round of Six-Way Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, 2004)

2. DPRK on Six-nation Working Group

The DPRK has hinted at its willingness to take part in a working group for the six-nation talks on the DPRK's nuclear activities, South Korea's foreign minister said Wednesday. Minister Ban Ki-moon also expressed regret that inter-Korean talks failed to take place as planned recently after the DPRK demanded changes in the talks' schedules citing the political situation in the ROK and regular military exercises between the ROK and the US.

"DPRK on Six-nation Working Group" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, 2004)

3. DPRK-PRC Ministerial Meeting

Kim Jong-Il, general secretary of the Korean Workers' Party and chairman of the National Defence Commission of the DPRK, Wednesday, March 24 received Li Zhaoxing, foreign minister of the PRC, and his party on a visit to the DPRK. Present there were Kang Sok-ju, first vice-minister of foreign affairs, and Wu Donghe, PRC ambassador to the DPRK.

"DPRK-PRC Ministerial Meeting" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, 2004)

4. DPRK Response to US-ROK Military Drills

North Koreans held rallies in Pyongyang denouncing the US military for holding annual joint military exercises with the ROK, the DPRK's state-run media reported.

"DPRK Response to US-ROK Military Drills" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, 2004)

5. KEDO DPRK Nuclear Project

The Executive Board of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) will meet Friday to discuss the stalled project to build two light-water nuclear reactors in the DPRK, KEDO officials said Tuesday. The meeting at KEDO headquarters in New York is the second board meeting after one in late January since the organization froze the project last December. The board will "discuss matters relating to the implementation of the suspension of the light-water reactor project", KEDO said in a statement.

"KEDO DPRK Nuclear Project" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, 2004)

6. ROK Presidential Impeachment Hearing

ROK President Roh Moo-Hyun has rejected a court request to appear in person to defend himself at the first public hearing on his impeachment next week, his aide said. Roh refused to attend the hearing at the Constitutional Court scheduled for Tuesday, fearing his presence would only provide fodder to opposition parties seeking to attack him in the court, said his former advisor for civil affairs Moon Jae-In.

"ROK Presidential Impeachment Hearing" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, 2004)

7. US Marine DMZ Training

The US Marines, in their largest numbers in 10 years, are engaging in joint military exercises with ROK troops near the tense border with the DPRK, officials said Thursday. US Marine forces recently began their fourth training in South Korea, dubbed the Korea Integrated Training Program (KITP), with ROK Marines near the Demilitarized Zone, which bisects the Koreas, and other areas, said an official at the US military command in Seoul, requesting anonymity.

"US Marine DMZ Training" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, 2004)

"US-ROK DMZ Military Drills" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 25, 2004)

8. DPRK-Myanmar Missile Trade

The DPRK offered to sell surface- to-surface missiles to the military leadership in Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, in a trade that concerns the US, a State Department official said. Myanmar government officials indicated they haven't accepted offers of such weapons, Matthew Daley, deputy assistant secretary in the bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, said in testimony to the House of Representatives International Relations Committee. Daley didn't say how many missiles may be involved.

"DPRK-Myanmar Missile Trade" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 26, 2004)

9. ROK on Iraq Troop Dispatch

The ROK still intends to send more than 3,000 troops to Iraq, despite scrapping plans for a deployment next month amid fears the soldiers could be drawn into combat, a top government official said. The official also rejected reports that ROK could follow Spain's lead and consider pulling out of the US-led mission in Iraq.

"ROK on Iraq Troop Dispatch" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 26, 2004)

10. DPRK-Japan Abduction Talks

Japan's Foreign Ministry believes disagreement among DPRK officials on how to address its abduction of Japanese nationals can be blamed for a delay in setting the next round of talks on the abduction issue between the two countries, ruling party lawmakers said Wednesday.

"There is a group which considers promoting Japan-DPRK talks, but there is also another group that does not," a senior Foreign Ministry official was quoted as saying.

"DPRK-Japan Abduction Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, 2004)

11. DPRK Economic Budget

The DPRK's legislature on Thursday unanimously approved a 2004 budget, which increased by 8.6% from the previous year. Finance Minister Mun Il Bong reported this year's spending plans to the Supreme People's Assembly, and the 687-member parliament approved the budget unanimously, the North's state-run KCNA news agency said. KCNA, however, didn't reveal the amount of either the 2003 or 2004 budget.

"DPRK Economic Budget" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 25, 2004)

12. Inter-Korean Trade

Trade between the ROK and the DPRK declined 26.4 per cent on the year to 65m US dollars in the first two months of 2004 the ROK's Unification Ministry said Thursday. The ROK imported 39m dollars worth of goods from the DPRK, mostly agricultural & fishery and textile products, while shipping 26m dollars worth of goods, mostly textile products and steel, to the DPRK. The ministry attributed the decline to a steep reduction in bilateral non-trade transactions, which dipped by 62.4 per cent in the first two months from the corresponding period last year to 15m dollars.

"Inter-Korean Trade" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 25, 2004)

13. OPEC DPRK Humanitarian Aid

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has reportedly decided to provide 250,000 US dollars to the DPRK to help improve water supplies and sanitation. The aid, which will be provided through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), is aimed at providing safe drinking water to DPRK people by improving sanitation facilities in the country's eastern and northern regions, the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency said.

"OPEC DPRK Humanitarian Aid" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, 2004)

People's Republic of China

1. Taiwan Presidential Election Declaration

President Chen Shui-bian was officially declared the victor in his bitter re-election battle sparking clashes and warnings from the PRC that it would not stand by and watch if the island descended into turmoil. The pro-independence Chen Saturday won by fewer than 30,000 votes over his sole challenger, Lien Chan, leader of the opposition Kuomintang (KMT) sparking days of protests that culminated in the storming of the offices of the island's main election body in a failed attempt to block an official declaration.

"Taiwan Presidential Election Declaration" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 26, 2004)

2. PRC on Taiwan Presidential Election

A war of words erupted between the PRC and Taiwan on Friday after Taiwanese authorities declared Chen Shui-bian winner of a bitterly disputed presidential election that has plunged the island into turmoil. Angry supporters of Chen's rival stormed the election body's offices shortly before the announcement, smashing windows, throwing stones and eggs and scuffling with riot police. In its strongest statement yet on the crisis, the PRC said it would not sit idly by if the protests spun out of control. Taiwan promptly told the PRC not to interfere.

"PRC on Taiwan Presidential Election" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 26, 2004)

"PRC on Taiwan Presidential Election " (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 25, 2004)

3. PRC-US Human Rights Relations

The US said that it wanted to encourage the PRC to make further reforms, after it started circulating a low-key draft resolution at the UN expressing concern about restrictions on civil liberties in the country. A first draft of the proposed resolution, which the US wants to propose at the annual meeting of the UN Human Rights Commission, stopped short of condemning human rights violations in the PRC, according to copies of the text circulated among diplomats.

"PRC-US Human Rights Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 26, 2004)

"PRC-US Human Rights Dialogue" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, 2004)

"PRC-US Human Rights Issue" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 25, 2004)

4. DPRK-PRC Diplomatic Relations

Kim Jong Il hosted a rare meeting Wednesday with the PRC's foreign minister to discuss the region's nuclear dispute. The PRC described the visit as a "very important contact." Li Zhaoxing, who arrived Tuesday in the DPRK capital of Pyongyang, became the first foreign minister from the PRC to visit the DPRK in five years. The PRC diplomat and DPRK officials were expected to discuss a date for the crucial working group meetings, which will seek to nail down details before the next full round of talks, sometime before July, according to the ROK's Foreign Minister Ban Ki Moon.

"DPRK-PRC Diplomatic Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 25, 2004)

Japan

1. Japan's Role in Iraq Reconstruction

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi renewed Japan's commitment to help reconstruct Iraq as the government mapped out its financial aid to the war-torn country. He made the remarks hours after the government said most of the 1.5 billion dollars promised by Tokyo for Iraqi reconstruction projects would be spent on rebuilding shattered energy, health and sanitation infrastructure. Outlining plans on how 1.2 billion dollars of the aid would be spent, Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi said projects would include restoring power plants and hospitals as well as garbage collection and sewage systems. Buying mobile electricity transformers, water purifiers, medical equipment and fire engines featured among other projects to be supported by Tokyo.

"Japan's Role in Iraq Reconstruction" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 26, 2004)

"Japan Iraq Troops Dispatch" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 25, 2004)

2. Japan Iraq Troops Dispatch

The head of the Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) humanitarian relief mission in the southern Iraqi city of Samawah visited two suburban elementary schools to take requests for repairs. Classrooms with peeling paint, damaged roofs and so on "can be repaired within our capacity," Colonel Masahisa Sato said after viewing the schools. About 30 students who had just finished their morning classes were excited to see the unexpected visitors.

"Japan Iraq Troops Dispatch" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, 2004)

3. Japan SDF Constitutional Revision?

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi hinted that he would seek to change the country's outdated constitution to allow for Japan's Self-Defence Forces to be called an army. "Under the Japanese constitution we are not allowed to call the Self-Defence Forces (SDF) an army, but to the eyes of anyone outside the country, they are an army," Koizumi said in an interview with London's Times newspaper. "Several points in the constitution are not quite logical in the light of commonsense," he said.

"Japan SDF Constitutional Revision?" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, 2004)

4. US on Japan's Anti-Trafficking Measures

Japan needs to redouble its efforts to fight human trafficking and assume a leadership role in the international community that matches its economic power, a senior US administration official said in a recent interview. "I was disappointed," John Miller, director of the US State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, said of Japan's response to the issue. "Japan is a leader, a leading democracy in the world, one of the wealthiest democracies with tremendous resources and I think there was a gap, a huge gap, between the level of the challenge and the resources and efforts that were being devoted to the challenge," he told Kyodo News.

"US on Japan's Anti-Trafficking Measures" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 25, 2004)

5. Japan Anti-war Protest

Tens of thousands of people took to the streets around Japan on Saturday, the first anniversary of the start of the US-led war on Iraq, to call for the end of the occupation and the withdrawal of Self-Defense Forces (SDF) troops. With nearly 100 peace rallies and events, part of an internationally coordinated peace action, the demonstrations signaled a revival of Japan's peace movement that suffered from a severe sense of defeat after the US and Britain invaded Iraq.

"Japan Anti-war Protest" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, 2004)

6. Japan-PRC Yasukuni Controversy

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda got annoyed with a reporter who asked him about the PRC's latest protest over Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's repeated visits to Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine. "Should I make a comment every time (some foreign leaders) talk about it?" the government's top spokesman asked. "I've already discussed Prime Minister Koizumi's way of thinking (on this matter) many times in the past. Please refer to it."

"Japan-PRC Yasukuni Controversy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, 2004)

7. Japan on PRC Military Expenditure

Japan wants the PRC to make its military spending transparent, Vice Defense Minister Takemasa Moriya said. "Other countries are making clear how much they spend on maintenance costs and equipment," Moriya told a news conference. "We want China also to make (that) clear from the standpoint of transparency."

"Japan on PRC Military Expenditure" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, 2004)

8. Japan Preemptive Strike Ability

The Japanese Defense Research Center has asserted that Japan should be equipped with the ability to start an assault in order to prepare for missile launches from the DPRK. In a report titled "2004 East Asia Military Strategies" issued by the research center on March 24, it said that "North Korea will get ready to manufacture more than two uranium enriched nuclear bombs next year," suggesting the logic of a preemptive strike. This is the first time a Japanese governmental agency has dealt with the subject of a preemptive strike, officially.

"Japan Preemptive Strike Ability" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 25, 2004)

Russia Far East

1. Russia on Six-Way DPRK Talks

The ITAR-TASS News ("RUSSIA PROMOTES NEW ROUND OF TALKS OF SIX ON NORTH KOREA," Moscow, 03/25/04) reported that Russia is "stepping up efforts to prepare for a new round of the six-party talks on the Korean issue," an informed Russian expert on Northeast Asia security issues has told ITAR-TASS. The situation in the Korean peninsula "will become one of the main issues for discussion at the forthcoming talks between Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and his PRC counterpart, Li Zhaoxing", the source said. The PRC foreign minister "intends to visit Moscow in late April to attend a ministerial meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization", he added. Moscow "fully supports China's active efforts to set up a working group that will gather in-between full-scale meetings of the delegations to address ongoing issues", he said. The group will be comprised of "seven to ten experts from each country taking part in the talks". A date for their first meeting "will be set after the PRC colleagues have ended consultations with all the partners and have received their approval". Russia "is planning to hold talks with Seoul at the foreign minister level" soon, the source said. These talks will also focus of the DPRK nuclear programme. "Preparations for Russian-Japanese consultations which may be held in Moscow in the next few weeks are also under way," the source said.

"Russia on Six-Way DPRK Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 25, 2004)

[\(return to top\)](#)

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