

NAPSNET Week in Review 27 February, 2004

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United States

1. DPRK Multilateral Talks

Six-way talks on the DPRK nuclear crisis were bogged down by "differences, difficulties and contradictions," but host PRC held out hopes on Friday for a joint statement to help end the 16-month-old stalemate. Late on a long third day of discussions in Beijing, senior negotiators struggled to hammer out the wording of the statement and agree on when another round of talks should be held. In a statement issued late on Thursday, the DPRK said the US was hindering a breakthrough in six-way talks by pressing "stale" demands and retaining a hostile stance.

"DPRK Multilateral Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 27, 2004)

"DPRK Multilateral Nuclear Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 26, 2004)

"DPRK Multilateral Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 24, 2004)

2. US on DPRK Human Rights

The US in a grim portrait of a closed country said the DPRK was "one of the world's most inhumane regimes." In its annual review on global human rights, the US State Department said the DPRK ruled by Kim Jong-Il "committed widespread abuses of human rights" and that basic human rights were "unheard of." The 2003 review said "reports from North Korea continue to paint a bleak picture of one of the world's most inhumane regimes." "Rigid controls over information, which limit the extent of our report, reflect the totalitarian repression of DPRK society. Basic freedoms are unheard of, and the regime committed widespread abuses of human rights," according to the report.

"US on DPRK Human Rights" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 26, 2004)

3. US on PRC and Russia Human Rights

The PRC has been "backsliding on key human rights issues," the State Department said Wednesday in a report that also accused Russia of manipulating elections and making threats against opposition parties. "We saw many developments covering the whole range from the dramatically uplifting to the disappointing," the State Department said in its annual report on the state of human rights worldwide. The report covers developments in 2003. On the PRC, the report said 2003 began with hopes that "incremental but unprecedented progress" the previous year would continue. Instead, the study said, the situation deteriorated. It cited arrests of democracy activists and individuals who discussed subjects on the Internet deemed sensitive by the government.

"US on PRC and Russia Human Rights" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 26, 2004)

Republic of Korea

1. DPRK on DPRK Multilateral Talks

Six-party talks on the DPRK's nuclear weapons program got underway Wednesday with Pyongyang and Washington showing few signs of backing down from their hardline positions. After clasping hands together for a group photograph, the six delegates sat themselves around a hexagonal table and were given two minutes each for opening remarks in front of television cameras. While the DPRK's chief delegate Deputy Foreign Minister Kim Kye-gwan said he was prepared to be flexible and hoped for a positive outcome, he insisted his party would be sticking to its "principles". "We will stick to the consistent position of our government, stick to our principles, but be flexible and cooperate in this meeting," Kim said at Beijing's Diaoyutai State Guesthouse. "I am looking forward to resolving the DPRK-US stalemate through dialogue." The DPRK rejected US allegations it has a weapons program based on enriched uranium, dampening hopes for a breakthrough on the eve of six-nation talks to address the country's nuclear ambitions.

"DPRK-US on DPRK Multilateral Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 26, 2004)

"DPRK on Multilateral Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 24, 2004)

2. DPRK-US Bilateral

The DPRK and the US held a two-and-a-half-hour bilateral meeting -- the longest and highest-level known contact since the nuclear standoff began October 2002. "The US-DPRK bilateral contact was held as scheduled. It finished at 6.30 pm (1030 GMT)," a ROK foreign ministry official told AFP. The meeting began Wednesday at 4 pm (0800 GMT).

"DPRK-US Bilateral" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 26, 2004)

3. DPRK-ROK Bilateral Diplomacy

On the eve of the second round of six-party talks aimed heading off nuclear arms development in the DPRK, envoys from Seoul and Pyongyang met separately before the formal multilateral negotiations begin today. The delegations from the DPRK and ROK, who arrived to mild weather in Beijing yesterday morning, began bilateral talks at 8 p.m. local time. The ROK announced it had also scheduled consultations with Russia at 7:30 am today.

"DPRK-ROK Bilateral Diplomacy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 24, 2004)

4. DPRK Multilateral Talks Extension

Six-party talks on the DPRK's nuclear weapons programs have been extended by a day with sessions to take place Saturday, a ROK spokesman said. "The talks have been extended by one day. The talks will continue on Saturday February 28," ROK delegation spokesman Shin Bong-kil told journalists. "I think there is going to be a closing ceremony tomorrow, as well." "DPRK Multilateral Talks Extension" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 27, 2004)

5. ROK on DPRK Working Groups

Three separate working groups could be formed at the upcoming six-way nuclear talks if participants agree to set up the framework to deal with technical details designed to resolve the DPRK's nuclear arms program, ROK officials said Tuesday. A senior ROK official said the issue of providing energy and economic aid to the DPRK in return for its freeze of nuclear arms program could be dealt with in a working group. His remarks came one day before the multilateral talks in Beijing. The official also made it clear that the formation of working groups is possible if the DPRK's freeze covers all of its nuclear facilities and material, and is followed "in a short period of time" by steps towards complete nuclear dismantlement and verification of this. He added that all countries except the DPRK, must endorse the DPRK's moves to set up the working groups.

6. Russia on DPRK Multilateral Talks

A final document may be signed on the results of the second round of the six-way talks on the DPRK nuclear program due to open on 25 February in Beijing, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Losyukov has said. "There is a common understanding of the need to set up a special group to work on the wording of the document and start preparing the final document on the meeting, which would be very important from the point of view of fixing the results of our talks on the issues of key importance," he said. At the same time, Losyukov did not rule out the possibility that the above joint document may reflect security guarantees for Pyongyang.

"Russia on DPRK Multilateral Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 24, 2004)

7. DPRK-IAEA Nuclear Inspection Discussions

The DPRK had unofficial contact in early February with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) over the U.N. nuclear watchdog's demand to resume inspections of the DPRK's nuclear facilities, diplomatic sources close to the inspection team said Tuesday. A diplomat from the DPRK Embassy in Vienna in charge of nuclear issues and an IAEA official handling nuclear inspections met in Vienna over the resumption of international inspections on the DPRK's Yongbyon nuclear complex, according to the diplomatic sources. It was the first time for the DPRK and the IAEA to have full contact over the issue since the DPRK kicked out a team of international inspectors in December 2002.

"DPRK-IAEA Nuclear Inspection Discussions" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 24, 2004)

8. Inter-Korean Railway Talks

The ROK and the DPRK will begin discussions this week to review the progress of two inter-Korean railways and adjacent roads severed more than a half-century ago. During the talks, scheduled to run from Wednesday through Thursday (25-26 February) in the DPRK's border town of Kaesong, the nations are expected to discuss the issue of inking an accord on the operation of trains across the heavily fortified border. The agenda may also include the ROK's possible provision of equipment and materials in building DPRK's southernmost train station near the border separating the Koreas.

"Inter-Korean Railway Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 24, 2004)

9. DPRK-US Humanitarian Aid?

Top US envoy to the ROK said today that the US will be prepared to offer energy and other basic necessities to the DPRK only after the communist country makes the commitment to verifiably dismantle its nuclear arms programs. "As a first step, there should be a clear indication from North Korea that it will give up all nuclear programs," US Ambassador Thomas C. Hubbard said at a breakfast meeting organized by the Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The DPRK has demanded compensation for shutting down its nuclear weapons programs, while the US has asked for the wholesale elimination of the DPRK's nuclear activities with no preconditions.

"DPRK-US Humanitarian Aid?" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 27, 2004)

10. ROK DPRK Humanitarian Aid

The ROK will offer the DPRK economic aid in return for a pledge to freeze and eventually dismantle its nuclear weapons facilities in talks beginning today in Beijing. Senior US and Asian officials, said the proposed aid would resume fuel oil shipments that were halted in late 2002. It would be unlikely for the ROK to be very specific about the energy offer, but it would probably be only a small fraction of the 500,000 tons of fuel oil a year halted in 2002, The Times said, citing an Asian official. President Bush would be unlikely to object to the offer after it was made, the report said, citing unnamed administration officials.

"ROK DPRK Humanitarian Aid" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 26, 2004)

11. ROK Economic Reform

The ROK must push forward wide-ranging corporate, labor and financial sector reforms that will allow it to meet future challenges, participants at an international conference to mark President Roh Moo-hyun's first year in office said today. Top economists and regional experts delivering keynote speeches at the roundtable talks said the ROK has undergone rapid transition in the last year. International Monetary Fund Managing Director Horst Kohler said the ROK had to stand on its own feet to effectively tackle the trend of globalization, which requires economic and political actors to constantly adapt to change.

"ROK Economic Reform" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 27, 2004)

People's Republic of China

1. PRC Multilateral Talks Diplomacy

The PRC, a longtime mediator on the DPRK nuclear crisis, held separate bilateral meetings with the US and the DPRK Tuesday, a day before six-party talks to resolve the standoff get underway. On Tuesday morning, the PRC Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi, the head of the PRC delegation, met with US Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly to coordinate efforts for the talks opening Wednesday, the Xinhua news agency said. Soon after, the PRC held a bilateral meeting with the DPRK delegation, headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Kim Kye-gwan, Xinhua said. The agency said the PRC will hold similar consultations with Japan and South Korea.

"PRC Multilateral Talks Diplomacy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 24, 2004)

2. PRC Arms Proliferation

The PRC, the host of this week's six-way talks on the DPRK nuclear crisis, may be wrestling with a problem partly of its own making, given its past as a major arms proliferator, according to analysts. While few believe the PRC has directly assisted the DPRK's nuclear program, it may have contributed in an indirect manner via its previous sales of sensitive technology to Pakistan. "It's pretty well accepted that there is a lot of PRC technology in Pakistan," said Ralph Cossa, the Honolulu-based president of the Pacific Forum CSIS think tank and an expert on proliferation issues. "It's also pretty well accepted that there has been a transfer of technology and equipment from Pakistan to North Korea," he said.

"PRC Arms Proliferation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 26, 2004)

3. PRC on Taiwan Presidential Election

The PRC dismissed promises by Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian to promote peace with the mainland if re-elected, and suggested it did not believe he was sincere. To really show sincerity, Chen should create conditions for dialogue and consultations between Taiwan and the mainland, said Li Weiyi, spokesman for the Taiwan Affairs Office under the PRC Cabinet. "Otherwise, it just shows he's again trying to fool the Taiwan people and world public opinion," he told a regular briefing.

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

4. Taiwan Presidential Election

Taiwanese opposition presidential candidate Lien Chan offered Tuesday to visit the PRC if elected to negotiate the gradual removal of missiles targeting the island. The Kuomintang (KMT) party chairman said the plan would be part of his "roadmap to peace" to end the decades of hostilities with Beijing. "I hope before (my inauguration on) May 20, with the people's mandate, I could make a peace journey to China on the basis of equality and dignity," Lien said during an interview with Japanese press here. "We must ask China to freeze and phase out the missiles deployed along its coast, because Taiwan is not an aggressive country," he added.

"Taiwan Presidential Election" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 24, 2004)

5. US on Cross-Straits Relations

US Secretary of State Colin Powell told PRC Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing in a phone call that the US position on any plans by Taiwan to alter the status quo remained "firm and unchanged," said the PRC. During the telephone conversation, Li expressed appreciation for the statements US President George W. Bush made on December 9 during Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to the US. Bush said then that the US opposes any unilateral decision by Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian to change the status quo.

"US on Cross-Straits Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 24, 2004)

Japan

1. DPRK-Japan Bilateral Meeting

The DPRK and Japan will hold a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of six-party talks which opened in Beijing over Pyongyang's nuclear program, PRC state media said. "Based on what we understand, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Japan will have a bilateral consultation this afternoon," China Central Television said on its noon news. "The exact time and location is not yet clear." The Japanese delegation has been pushing hard for a one-on-one meeting to discuss the kidnapping of Japanese citizens by the DPRK.

"DPRK-Japan Bilateral Meeting" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 26, 2004)

"DPRK-Japan Bilateral Diplomacy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 24, 2004)

2. DPRK-Japan Abduction Issue

The DPRK has insisted its kidnapping of Japanese citizens should not be part of the six-party talks on its nuclear weapons program. Deputy Foreign Minister Kim Kye-gwan said "the abduction issue should not be on the agenda" as the DPRK had clarified its position when a Japanese delegation visited the DPRK earlier this month. Kim, the DPRK's chief delegate to the six-way talks in Beijing starting Wednesday, was speaking at Pyongyang airport as he prepared to leave for Beijing. The DPRK has previously warned it would oppose Japan's participation in the nuclear talks, if Tokyo brought up the issue.

"DPRK-Japan Abduction Issue" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 24, 2004)

3. US-Japan Military Ties

Japan and the US signed an agreement to boost the sharing of military supplies and services if Japan is attacked, the foreign ministry said. The deal, which amends the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement, was signed by foreign minister Yoriko Kawaguchi and US Ambassador Howard Baker, the ministry said in a statement. The pact allows the country for the first time to supply US forces with ammunition in the case of a sudden or foreseen assault on Japan, a foreign ministry official said. The previous agreement allowed only the sharing of supplies such as food and petroleum in the run-up to a military contingency, where a regional incident could threaten Japan's security, the official said.

"US-Japan Military Ties" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 27, 2004)

4. Japan Troops in Iraq

Some 140 Japanese ground troops, readying for deployment to Iraq, spent the day honing their shooting skills on this sprawling firing range in the heart of the Kuwaiti desert. "This is a basic shooting training ... We as a military must be prepared for any kind of training, including shooting. It is very important," commanding officer Colonel Koichiro Bansho told reporters as he oversaw the exercises, some 80 kilometres (50 miles) north of Kuwait City. "It is not directly related," to the security situation in Iraq. "This is quite a natural and scheduled training," Bansho said, as soldiers fired automatic rifles, machine-guns and anti-tank missiles at mock targets around them.

"Japan Troops in Iraq" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 26, 2004)

5. ROK-Japan Free Trade Panel

ROK and Japan have agreed to establish another committee to help accelerate talks for a bilateral free trade agreement (FTA), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade said Wednesday. Wrapping up their second round of FTA negotiations in Tokyo, the two countries agreed to push FTA talks through discussions by a total of seven panels, said the ministry.

"ROK-Japan Free Trade Panel" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 26, 2004)

6. Japan Doomsday Cult Leader Sentenced

The Aum Supreme Truth sect, led by guru Shoko Asahara, who was sentenced to death, was the first terrorist group to make the nightmare of unleashing a weapon of mass destruction on the public a reality. While Asahara's lack of testimony in his eight-year-long trial for masterminding 27 deaths left the motives for the 1995 nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway unclear, his earlier utterances indicated he saw Aum at war with the Japanese state, and it had to strike a decisive blow.

"Japan Doomsday Cult Leader Sentenced" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 27, 2004)

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