

NAPSNET Week in Review 3 May, 2002

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United States

1. Russia-US Arms Control

The US and Russian defense chiefs reported modest progress Monday toward a nuclear arms agreement but gave no indication they had settled the major stumbling blocks. "We're making progress, and the meetings will continue later this week in Washington," Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said, referring to meetings scheduled between Secretary of State Colin Powell and Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov. After about two hours of talks with Rumsfeld, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov told reporters that his government had submitted to the US a "set of new ideas" to push the talks toward agreement.

"Russia-US Arms Deal" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 3, US)

"Russia-US Arms Control" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 29, US)

Republic of Korea

1. DPRK-US Relations

The DPRK has informed the US that it would welcome a visit to Pyongyang by a US State Department envoy, apparently opening the way for the first official talks between the two countries in 18 months, an administration official said Monday. "There are indications they might be willing to resume dialogue," said an unnamed US official. Another indication earlier this month was that ROK envoy, Lim Dong-won, reported back that the DPRK was ready to receive Pritchard in Pyongyang. Pritchard might go to the DPRK at some time but no agreement has been reached or dates set, an official said.

"DPRK-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 29, US)

2. DPRK Clinton Invitation

The DPRK denied Thursday that former US President Bill Clinton has been invited to Pyongyang to discuss bilateral relations. "We make it clear that we have not invited former U.S. President Clinton," a foreign ministry spokesman said in a report carried by Pyongyang Radio. It was issued after a foreign media outlet claimed the DPRK extended the invitation to Clinton.

"DPRK Clinton Invitation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 3, US)

"DPRK Clinton Invitation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 29, US)

3. DPRK-ROK Relations

The DPRK demanded on April 5 that the ROK sack its foreign minister and apologize for what it called his support of the US "hard-line" policy toward the DPRK. The DPRK was responding to an April 23 Washington Post report quoting ROK Foreign Minister Choi Sung-hong as saying, "Sometimes carrying a big stick works in forcing DPRK to come forward." Choi made the remark in Washington earlier this month, the Post reported. Choi has said his remarks were taken out of context.

"DPRK-ROK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 29, US)

4. DPRK Mystery Boat

Divers inspecting the wreckage of a suspected DPRK spy boat that sank in a gunfight with Japan's Coast Guard found a corpse and a weapon on May 3, an official said. On Thursday, divers discovered a weapon and the body of a man, said Coast Guard spokesman Hiroyuki Isobe. He declined to comment on what type of weapon was found. Fifteen crew are believed to have gone down with the ship, which sank inside the PRC's 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone during last December.

"DPRK Mystery Boat" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 3, US)

"DPRK Mystery Ship" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 29, US)

5. Arirang Festival

A hundred-thousand dancers and gymnasts performed in a steady drizzle Monday at a stadium in the DPRK capital to mark the start of a festival that celebrates the birthday of the country's founder, Kim Il Sung. The opening ceremonies, held in Pyongyang's May Day Stadium, featured mass games in which thousands of students used placards to create giant backdrops for teams of gymnasts and other performers. At one point, the placards formed the beaming portrait of the late founder, who would have celebrated his 90th birthday on Monday. Although this year's festival also coincides with the 60th birthday of the DPRK's current leader, Kim Jong Il, he did not attend.

"Arirang Festival" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 29, US)

6. DPRK Defectors

Three DPRK defectors who sought asylum in ROK after entering two embassies in Beijing have arrived at Seoul's Incheon International Airport. The two defectors, Kim Mun-ok and Kim Ok-sil, both in their early 20s, arrived early Saturday, one day after another DPRK defector, O Se-hyeok, climbed the walls of the German embassy compound. Talks to send the two defectors to a third country and then to Seoul proceeded smoothly, an official at the US Embassy in Beijing said. The PRC Foreign Ministry has not issued any comment on the incidents.

"DPRK Defectors" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 29, ROK)

"ROK on DPRK Refugees" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 3, US)

7. DPRK-ROK Family Reunions

Joongang Ilbo ("A 4TH REUNION UNDER WAY AT NORTH RESORT," Mount Geumgang," 04/29/02) reported that a group of 99 ROK citizens have met with family members living in the DPRK for the first time in half a century. The first meeting of a three-day reunion with 186 of their relatives from DPRK took place Sunday at the Kumgang Mountain Inn. The three-day reunion of separated families was the fourth of its kind after the ROK and the DPRK agreed to begin the program in June 2000. A support team, including a 19-member medical crew to assist the elderly family members, accompanied the group. Thirty journalists were allowed to make the trip and broadcast the reunion live to ROK. Third-country journalists were not allowed.

"DPRK-ROK Family Reunions" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 3, US)

"Separated Family Reunion" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 29, ROK)

8. DPRK, Main Enemy?

The ROK government's move to delete a reference to the DPRK as the ROK's "main enemy" in the National Defense Ministry's public planning document is stirring controversy. A government official said a high-level discussion of the issue would be held soon; the ministry reportedly opposes the deletion of the phrase. The Korean Veterans Association denounced the change as "unreasonable," saying it ignored the reality of a DPRK military threat. The group said the DPRK still refers to the ROK as an "enemy" and a "target" and refuses to cooperate in lessening cross-border military tension. Administration sympathizers say the designation is hampering the development of ties with DPRK like inter-Korean railroad rebuilding project which requires that military measures be agreed for safety in the Demilitarized Zone

"DPRK, Main Enemy?" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 29, ROK)

9. DPRK-Japan Red Cross Talks

Red Cross officials from Japan and DPRK on Monday opened their first talks in two years, looking to resolve a dispute over allegations that DPRK kidnapped Japanese citizens in the 1970s and 1980s. Ri Ho-rim, deputy secretary general of the DPRK Red Cross Society stated that the DPRK and Japanese Red Cross officials made some progress on the issue of missing Japanese nationals on Monday, but also said that the investigation into was going slower than expected. Both sides emerged from the morning session sounding positive. Ri said they discussed the missing Japanese, food aid and the fate of some 1,800 Japanese women who moved to DPRK with ethnic Korean husbands between 1959 and 1982.

"DPRK-Japan Red Cross Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 29, US)

10. UN Food Aid to DPRK

The UN says it will stop distributing food to more than 1 million children and elderly in the DPRK because of a shortfall in international aid, sparking fears of a worsening humanitarian crisis in the country. In November, the United Nations appealed for US\$258 million so UN agencies and international relief organizations could respond to the most urgent needs in the DPRK, but to date just US\$23.5 million has been pledged, Kenzo Oshima, the UN's undersecretary-general for humanitarian affairs, said Tuesday. Eventually, unless donors act, the more than 6 million DPRK citizens currently fed by the UN World Food Program - mainly women, children and the elderly - "may face acute and indeed life-threatening shortages of food, medicines and clean drinking water," Oshima told a news conference.

"UN Food Aid to DPRK" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 3, US)

People's Republic of China

1. Hu Jintao US Visit

PRC Vice President Hu Jintao declared that the PRC's rapport with the US is "full of vigor and vitality," as his six-day diplomatic mission to the US neared its end. The US and the PRC are poised to grow closer economically and politically, provided both sides respect agreements and communiqués crafted since the late president Richard Nixon "opened the gate" between the two countries 30 years ago, Hu said May 2 at a banquet San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown hosted in his honor. Hu said the array of views he exchanged this week with President George Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney left him believing that, while US-PRC relations have "not always been smooth," there is enough understanding to work through problems. "Both sides have taken on to resolve differences and improve relations," Hu expressed.

"Tomorrow, I leave for China. I take with me the confidence that in the years to come, US-China relations will flourish and prosper."

"Hu Jintao US Visit" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 3, US)

2. Cross-strait Relations

Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian said on Thursday that a breakthrough in political ties with the PRC was unlikely in the near term because the PRC would be kept busy by its leadership succession. "At the moment, mainland China faces problems such as leadership succession so it may be difficult to expect a further improvement in cross-strait relations in the short term," Chen told a group of visiting US academics. President Chen told his guests Taiwan would not abuse US support for the democratic island of 23 million. "Having US backing does not mean we can do whatever we want. We will never misjudge the situation and make a wrong decision that will influence the stability in the Taiwan Strait," said Chen.

"Cross-strait Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 3, US)

3. US Ship Hong Kong Port Call

A US aircraft carrier and four other ships in its battle group came to Hong Kong on Monday, bringing in about 6,000 sailors for a port call that ended the PRC's latest ban on such visits. The USS Kitty Hawk was set to spend several days here on a routine stop, along with a cruiser, a destroyer, a frigate and an oiler from its battle group, said Barbara Zigli, a spokeswoman for the US Consulate.

"US Ship Hong Kong Port Call" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 29, US)

Japan

1. Japan-US Military Relations

US Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman, General Richard Myers, Monday met Japan's most senior defense official during a tour of three of Japan, the ROK, and the Philippines. Myers held half-hour talks with Defense Agency head Gen Nakatani, said agency spokesman Koichiro Oshima. Later, Japanese media reported the men discussed proposed legal changes being debated in Parliament on emergency military measures to be taken if Japan is attacked, Japan's contribution to the war in Afghanistan and recent accidents involving US military aircraft here.

"Japan-US Military Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, April 29, US)

2. Japan Anti-terror Support

Japan plans to extend its logistical support for the US-led antiterror campaign by keeping its military vessels in the Indian Ocean areas for another six months to November, a report said Thursday. "The government has decided that acts of terrorism could resurge as US-led forces continue the antiterrorism campaign in Afghanistan," the Yomiuri Shimbun daily said, citing official sources. "The government plans to hold talks with the US side to finalise details after the Golden Week holidays and hopes to have the plan officially approved at the meetings of the Security Council of Japan and the cabinet as early as May 17," the report said.

"Japan Anti-terror Support" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 3, US)

3. DPRK Japanese Abductions

The DPRK agreed to resume searches for missing Japanese whom Tokyo alleges were kidnapped by the DPRK, as part of a Red Cross accord. Under the deal the DPRK agreed to investigate the whereabouts of 11 Japanese nationals identified by Japan who says they were seized by DPRK agents from 1978 to 1983. According to a joint statement issued at the end of two days of discussions between Red Cross officials from the countries, Japan said it would also look into the cases of DPRK citizens who disappeared in Japan before 1945.

"DPRK Japanese Abductions" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 3, US)

4. Koizumi Yasukuni Shrine Visit

Despite anger from Asian neighbors, more than half of Japanese support a visit by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to Yasukuni shrine in Tokyo. Some 53 percent of people generally approve of Koizumi's visit to the Yasukuni shrine where 14 convicted war criminals are honoured along with 2.47 million Japanese who have died in wars since the mid-19th century, Kyodo said, citing a recent poll. The poll found 39.4 percent of respondents expressed support for Koizumi's April 21 visit to the shrine, and a further 13.6 percent said he should go on August 15. "Koizumi Yasukuni Shrine Visit" (NAPSNet Daily Report, May 3, US)

Nuclear Issues

1. Related News and Analysis

The Indian cabinet has approved placing the country's nuclear arsenal under the new Strategic Nuclear Command. Pakistan has expressed concern over the recent testing of Brahmos missile by India. Six persons were killed when fire broke out at the High Energy Materials Research Laboratory in Pune, India. In his essay for the Daily News, M V Ramana argues that "joint action on the part of the international community" needed for strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty "may not be forthcoming."

"Related News and Analysis" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #16)

Afghanistan

1. Current Situation

At least 115 people were killed or injured in factional violence in the eastern Paktia province. Former Afghan King Zahir Shah is reportedly trying to diffuse the situation in the province. There have also been reports of skirmishes between troops allied to warlord Muhammad Atta and Abdul Rashid Dostum in the district of Shogarah. Franklin Hagenbeck, the US General commanding ground forces in Afghanistan, has warned the warlords not to threaten Karzai's government. Rockets or mortars were reportedly fired at an airfield in the eastern city of Khost. Meanwhile, the British and US troops have launched a large operation against suspected hideouts of al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters in eastern Afghanistan. According to a US military spokesman, Australian Special Forces, backed by US troops, killed four al-Qaeda fighters near the Afghan-Pakistan border. Tribal elders of North Waziristan Agency along Pakistan-Afghan border have demanded the immediate removal of all American troops from the area. There have been reports of attempted missile attacks in the area.

"Current Situation" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #16)

India-Pakistan Tensions

1. News

President Pervez Musharraf has ruled out the possibility of any unilateral withdrawal of troops in the standoff with India. According to Minister for Finance Shaukat Aziz, the troop deployment is causing an overrun in Pakistan's defense spending. Indian troops and air force have begun a scheduled military exercise near the Pakistan border.

"News" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #16)

2. Analysis

Indian columnist K.K. Katyal believes that de-escalation along India- Pakistan border "does not seem to be on the cards." Writing for the daily Hindu, Raja Mohan argues that unless the Indian government develops strategic alternatives in its stand off with Pakistan, "the military situation on the border is likely to end up in a humiliating political defeat."

"Analysis" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #16)

3. Kashmir

Political unrest and violence has continued in Jammu and Kashmir. Mirwaiz Omar Farooq, a senior leader of the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has stated that his group is willing to discuss many different proposals with the Indian government. APHC has rejected talks with the ruling National Conference and the Congress, calling these parties 'pro India.' Saleem Hashmi, spokesman for the militant Hizb-ul- Mujahideen, believes that armed struggle and peace talks could go side by side.

"Internal Situation" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #16)

India and Pakistan

1. Pakistan: Domestic Situation

According to official results, President Pervez Musharraf has won the referendum that allows for his continuation as president for the next five years. Reports in newspapers and by Pakistan's Human Rights Commission have alleged large-scale irregularities in the conduct of the referendum. Meanwhile, President Musharraf has declared that, like the referendum, the age limit of voters for the October elections will be reduced from 21 to 18 years. The Daily Times reports that the government may disqualify large number of political leaders from contesting the October general elections.

"Pakistan: Domestic Situation" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #16)

2. India: Domestic Situation

A motion sponsored by the opposition parties to censure Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government over its handling of violence in Gujarat failed to win in the Lower House of the Parliament. The vote on the motion in the Upper House of the Parliament is scheduled for the next week. The Indian government has accepted the opposition's demand that the central government should intervene in Gujarat as the political turmoil caused by the riots continues. There have been reports of continuing sporadic communal violence in Gujarat and some of the riot victims are reportedly moving out of the state. A recent Human Rights Watch report has accused Gujarat government officials and police of "extensive participation" in the riots.

"India: Domestic Situation" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #16)

Regional News

1. Sri Lanka

The Sri Lankan navy suspects that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) may be trying to smuggle weapons into the country. P. Sahadevan's essay in the daily Deccan Herald states that "it is difficult to believe that the LTTE will become easily amenable to any reasonable compromise peace deal." V. Suryanarayan article in Frontline, an Indian magazine, attempts to assess LTTE's commitment to the peace process. Ram Manikkalingam's article posits three scenarios that can emerge from the ceasefire agreement - war, peace and no war-no peace. He argues that, of the three, the peace scenario the "least plausible."

"Sri Lanka" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #16)

2. Nepal

Nepali political parties have called upon Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba to start negotiations with the Maoist rebels as the violent fight between the Maoist rebels and the Filipino security forces continues.

"Nepal" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #16)

3. Philippines

Writing for the Frontline magazine, Walden Bello argues that "the US- aided hunt for Abu Sayyaf is merely an excuse that enables the U.S. to establish and expand a military presence in the region."

"Philippines" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #16)

4. Central Asia

Two articles by Ahmed Rashid in the Far Eastern Economic Review examine the current political situation in Central Asia republics.

"Central Asia" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #16)

5. Region - General

The daily Hindu published an interview with the US National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice that focuses on South Asia.

"Region - General" (SANDNet Weekly Update, V.3 #16)

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