



NAPSNET Week in Review 31 March, 2003

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United States

1. US on DPRK-ROK Talk Cancellations

The US said it regretted the DPRK's decision to cancel talks this week with the ROK, describing them as a useful. The DPRK suspended the economic and maritime talks on Saturday, billing the move as retaliation for what it said was the ROK's high military state of alert as a US-led war erupted against Iraq. "We have always supported North-South dialogue. We think it's important to resolve the bilateral issues," said US State Department spokesman Richard Boucher. "It's a good channel to make clear to the North Koreans that they must end their nuclear arms program. So we find the North cancellation of the talks scheduled for later this week regrettable."

"US on DPRK-ROK Talk Cancellations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 25, US)

2. US on DPRK Ballistic Missile Test Signs

The US has detected signs that the DPRK may be preparing to test-fire a long-range missile, the top US envoy to Japan told senior ruling party lawmakers Monday, an aide to one of the lawmakers said. Although US officials say there is no indication of an imminent launch, the information comes amid concerns that the DPRK may test-fire one of its ballistic missiles to coincide with Japan's scheduled launch Friday of two spy satellites. The DPRK test-fired two short-range missiles in late February and early March amid tensions over its suspected nuclear weapons programs. The US and ROK called those tests attempts to force the US into direct talks. US Ambassador Howard Baker told Taku Yamasaki, the secretary-general of the Liberal Democratic Party, the US will notify Japan if there are clear signs that the DPRK is about to test a missile, a secretary from Yamasaki's office said on condition of anonymity.

"There are some signs, but none that are certain. We will definitely inform Japan in advance if it becomes certain," the aide quoted Baker as saying

"US on DPRK Ballistic Missile Test Signs" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 25, US)

3. US-Led War on Iraq Budget

US President Bush, in remarks at the Pentagon March 25, announced that he was sending the US Congress a wartime supplemental appropriations request of \$74.7 billion, "to fund needs directly arising from the Iraqi conflict and our global war against terror." The president said the funds would be used "to pay for the massive task of transporting a fully-equipped military force, both active duty and reserve, to a region halfway around the world," and also includes money for relief and reconstruction in a free Iraq.

"US-Led War on Iraq Budget" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 25, US)

4. US Baghdad Missile Mishap

The United States sidestepped a report that an errant US missile killed at least 15 people in Baghdad on Wednesday, but said its invasion of Iraq (news - web sites) was on schedule. Brigadier General Vincent Brooks told reporters in a briefing at US Central Command's forward headquarters in Qatar he could not confirm reports that the United States had bombed a residential neighborhood in the Iraqi capital, spurring anger in the streets. Television reports of the attack showed a shattered apartment building and the dead and wounded in a rubble-strewn street crowded with agitated, shouting Iraqis. Reuters correspondents at the scene said they counted at least 15 bodies, many burned or dismembered. A pregnant woman was among the dead. Some of the bodies lay in the smoldering wreckage of mangled cars.

"US Baghdad Missile Mishap" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 26, US)

5. International Non-Proliferation

The international community must concentrate more efforts on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to reap long-term benefits, experts and scholars said at a symposium on non-proliferation in Tokyo. About 50 people, many of them university academics, gathered for the one-day symposium hosted by the United Nations University and the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Japan, I believe, has contributed significant efforts in non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. But the recent tension involving North Korea and the situation in Iraq make it more important and urgent that we discuss this issue seriously and urgently," said Yoshitaka Shindo, parliamentary secretary for foreign affairs of Japan. Symposium participants also called on the PRC to open a dialogue over its weapons programmes, especially over arms exports.

"International Non-Proliferation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 25, US)

6. Northeast Asia Alliances

While the US has been preoccupied with Iraq, a shuffling of alliances is taking place in Northeast Asia, accelerated by the US failure to defuse the DPRK nuclear crisis, according to government officials and analysts. The result is likely to be a crumbling of Cold War ties and a lessening of US power and prestige in a region where the US has held sway for 50 years, they said. The key shift is on the Korean Peninsula, where the ROK and their new government are increasingly unwilling to play the role of loyal supporter of the US. The result is a weakening of the two three-legged alliances that have defined relations in the region ever since the end of World War II: the US, Japan and ROK on one side, and Russia, the PRC and the DPRK on the other.

"Northeast Asia Alliances" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 25, US)

Republic of Korea

1. DPRK on US-Led War on Iraq

The DPRK on Tuesday claimed the US may attack the DPRK, sparking a "second Iraqi crisis." Labeled by US President George W. Bush as a part of an "axis of evil" with Iraq and Iran, the DPRK fears that it may be targeted after the US-led attack on Baghdad. It accuses the US of inciting the dispute over its suspected nuclear weapons programs to create an excuse for invasion. "No one can vouch that the US will not spark the second Iraqi crisis on the Korean Peninsula," North Korea's state-run Minju Joson newspaper said. The DPRK will "increase its national defense power on its own without the slightest vacillation no matter what others may say," the paper said. The DPRK said Monday that the US is using the war against Iraq as a test for military action against the DPRK.

"DPRK on US-Led War on Iraqi" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 25, US) "DPRK-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, PRC)

2. DPRK-US Relations

The DPRK may be softening its stance on talks over its revived nuclear ambitions despite renewed threats to quit the 1953 armistice which ended the Korean war. US Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly said on Wednesday there were signs that the DPRK might be easing its insistence that its nuclear programs can only be addressed in direct US-North Korean talks. "We have detected indications (there is) possibly some softening of that," Kelly, the State Department's point man for east Asian and Pacific affairs, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee without elaborating. Kelly stated after the hearing the possible easing in the DPRK's position was suggested in part by a press report and he said it might amount to nothing.

"DPRK-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 27, US)

3. DPRK-US Military Relations

The DPRK has withdrawn from regular liaison meetings with US military authorities to protest an ongoing US-ROK joint military drill and arms build-up, the DPRK said. The Korean People's Army (KPA) told US military authorities it was pulling out of regular contacts between US and DPRK liaison officers, the Korean Central News Agency said. "And the message warned that if the US forces side continues pushing the situation on the Korean peninsula to the brink of war as now in gross breach of the armistice agreement, the KPA side will have no option but to take new important measure as regards the armistice agreement for its self-defence," it said. Officers from the DPRK and the US have met regularly at the Panmunjom border point to discuss matters concerning the 1953 armistice agreement signed at the end of the 1950-1953 Korean War.

"DPRK-US Military Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 26, US)

4. DPRK UN Meeting Cancellation

The DPRK on March 26, 2003 cut off the only regular military contact with the US-led UN Command that monitors the Korean War armistice, accusing the US of trying to attack the DPRK. The move will further isolate the DPRK amid heightened tension over its suspected nuclear weapons programs. The DPRK said Tuesday it would boost its defenses amid such fears. The DPRK's Korea People's Army sent a telephone message to the UN Command saying it will no longer send its delegates to the liaison-officers' meeting at the inter-Korean border village of Panmunjom. "It is meaningless to sit together with the US forces side to discuss any issue as long as it remains arrogant," the DPRK's official news agency KCNA quoted the DPRK message as saying. The UN Command had no immediate comment.

"United Nations Command on DPRK Withdrawal" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 27, US)

"DPRK UN Meeting Cancellation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 26, US)

<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/0303/MAR26.html#item7>

5. ROK Parliament Troop Deployment Delay

ROK lawmakers delayed a vote to authorize sending 700 troops to Iraq as the ROK opposition to the US-led war gained ground. ROK President Roh Moo-Hyun pledged support for the US-led war last week and called on the National Assembly to approve the dispatch of 700 non-combatants to the war zone. An anti-war backlash derailed a scheduled vote on Tuesday and lawmakers were expected to approve Roh's motion at a session later Friday. That vote will not take place until Monday at the earliest, a National Assembly spokesman stated after legislators opposed to the war called for more debate. A bloc from of Roh's own liberal Millennium Democratic Party, which feels war is unjust and violates South Korea's constitution, won enough support from dissidents in the conservative Grand National Party, to gain approval for a delay of the vote originally set for 2:00 pm (0500 GMT).

"ROK Parliament Troop Deployment Delay" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 28, US) "ROK

Lawmakers Against Iraq War" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 26, ROK)

<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/0303/MAR26.html#item14>

"Troop Dispatch Delayed to Pass" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 26, ROK) "ROK Parliament on Iraq War Request" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 26, US) "ROK Parliament on ROK Role in US-Led War on Iraq" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 25, US)

<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/0303/MAR25.html#item2>

6. ROK Anti-War Protests

The ROK is among the small group of countries that has given its support to the US action in Iraq. Seoul has seen daily protests since the war started. On Tuesday, parliament will debate sending a non-combat engineering unit of around 600 soldiers to Iraq. But the decision has split public opinion here. While conservative groups support the move, there have been daily anti-war protests. And many fear the implications of a US victory against Iraq in future dealings with neighboring DPRK - also labelled part of an axis of evil by US President, George W Bush. Anti-war demonstrations were already taking place on a daily basis well before the US took military action against Iraq.

"Anti-War Protest in ROK" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 25, ROK) "ROK Public on US-Led War on Iraq" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 27, US)

7. ROK-DPRK Relations

ROK President Roh Moo-Hyun tried to ease DPRK fears of a pre-emptive attack as the US-led war on Iraq raised tensions on the Korean peninsula. The DPRK condemned the US-led military action Monday as a "war against humanity" while the ROK has pledged support for the war effort. Fearing it could be the US' next target, the DPRK is now reportedly preparing for war and threatening to sever ties with the ROK. Over the weekend, the DPRK suspended planned economic talks with the ROK scheduled for Wednesday, effectively freezing work on a joint project to build an industrial zone in the DPRK. Analysts say ministerial level talks set for next month may be called off. President Roh, an advocate of engagement with the DPRK, on Monday tried to calm tension by dismissing speculation that the DPRK could be the next US target after Iraq.

"Peaceful Resolution of DPRK Problem" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 25, ROK) "ROK-DPRK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, US)

<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/0303/MAR24.html#item1>

8. ROK-US Alliance Dealing with DPRK

Foreign Minister Yoon Young-kwan travels to US Wednesday for consultations on an array of national-security issues facing the two countries, the most urgent of which is DPRK nuclear program. US visit, jammed with meetings with senior US officials and US lawmakers, is part of the Roh Moo-hyun administration's diplomatic effort to resolve the nuclear problem. They are pondering the possible implications of indications that US-led campaign is not going to be as quickly won as had been expected. Yoon is scheduled to meet with Vice President Dick Cheney upon his arrival in Washington on March 26, and with Congressional leaders on Thursday. Separate meetings with Secretary of State Colin Powell and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice are set for Friday. Yoon will also coordinate President Roh's visit to US. He is also scheduled to meet Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld before departing Washington. ROK officials said that Yoon's main mission will be to further coordinate the international community's response to DPRK nuclear problem in a multilateral framework.

"US-ROK on DPRK and Iraq" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 27, US) "US-DPRK Multilateral Resolution?" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 27, US) "ROK Minister Visit Washington"

(NAPSNet Daily Report, March 26, ROK)

<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/0303/MAR26.html#item13>

"ROK-US Alliance Dealing with DPRK" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 25, ROK) "ROK-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, PRC)

9. DPRK on Japan Satellite Launch

The DPRK has warned that Japan would face "self-destruction" if it puts a spy satellite into orbit as Japan said it had stepped up vigilance amid reports that the DPRK may test a ballistic missile around the time of the satellite launch. The DPRK's official Korean Central News Agency accused Japan of acting as "a shock brigade" for the launch of a US pre-emptive attack and nuclear war against the DPRK. "If it takes the road of re-invasion, toeing the US policy to stifle the DPRK militarily, Japan will not have its security guaranteed but face self-destruction," KCNA said. "Japan should not run amuck, clearly mindful of such consequences."

"DPRK on Japan Satellite Launch" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 26, US)

10. DPRK's Nuclear Issue

Maurice Strong, a special envoy of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, said on March 18 that he would talk to officials of the DPRK about the current situation on the Korean Peninsula, since he arrived here for a four-day visit to the DPRK. "The DPRK is an important member of the United Nations and I will report to the DPRK officials about the result of activities since my last visit," Strong said. Strong said there had been both progress and difficulties in the past two months with regard to the Korean Peninsula's situation. "There was progress in meeting the immediate humanitarian needs (of the DPRK) and more international understanding of the need for a peaceful resolution of the issues of the country," he said. "DPRK's Nuclear Issue" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, PRC)

11. DPRK Military Spending

The DPRK has set aside a greater chunk of its limited resources to beef up its military while a nuclear crisis escalates, and announced a rare sale of government bonds to fill empty state coffers. The DPRK parliament, at its annual session Wednesday, allocated 15.4 percent of this year's budgeted expenditure to defense, up from 14.9 percent last year. Finance Minister Mun Il-Bong said the increase was needed to develop the DPRK's defense industry and train troops "as an invincible army and thus consolidate the country's defenses as an impregnable fortress."

"DPRK Military Spending" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 27, US)

12. ROK Spy Agency Appointment

ROK President Roh Moo-Hyun has appointed a human rights lawyer to head the ROK's powerful spy agency as part of a reform drive, the presidential Blue House said. Ko Young-Koo, who served as the head of the Lawyers for a Democratic Society, was named as the director of the National Intelligence Service (NIS), it said. The appointment of a civic activist to the key post came after Roh, a former human rights lawyer himself, vowed to separate the NIS from politics and stop it being used for surveillance of political opponents.

"ROK Spy Agency Appointment" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 26, US)

13. EU-DPRK UN Human Rights Body

The European Union plans to bring the DPRK before the U.N.'s top human rights body for major abuses, including killings and torture, in the first such move against the DPRK, diplomatic sources said on Thursday. The US has indicated it will be a "co-sponsor" of the resolution, expected to be presented in the next day or two to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, they added. The 53-member state forum is holding its annual six-week session to examine violations worldwide through April 25. "The EU text expresses deep concerns on torture, harsh and degrading treatment, public executions and capital punishment for political motives...", a diplomatic stated. "It is unbelievable, but it is the first time," he added.

"EU-DPRK UN Human Rights Body" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 27, US)

People's Republic of China

1. PRC-Russian Response to Iraq War

PRC Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing had a phone conversation with his Russian counterpart Igor Ivanov on March 23, calling again for an early stop for the ongoing military actions against Iraq launched by the US and Britain. The war has deeply concerned most countries and PRC appeals again to stop the military actions as soon as possible, Li said. Ivanov briefed Li on Russia's latest stance. The two foreign ministers also exchanged views on Sino-Russian relations, said the report.

"PRC-Russian Response to Iraq War" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, PRC)

2. PRC-US Relations

PRC President Hu Jintao said PRC is willing to work with the US for a healthy and stable development of Sino-US relations and the benefit of the two peoples. Hu made the remark during a phone conversation with US President George W. Bush on March 18. Congratulating Hu on his election as PRC's president, Bush said the US is willing to cooperate closely with PRC to continuously advance bilateral ties. Bush reiterated the US government's adherence to the one-PRC policy as well as the three US-Sino joint communiques, saying the US will not support the "independence of Taiwan." Hu emphasized PRC's new leaders will stick to the reform and opening-up as well as the independent foreign policy of peace and continue to develop cooperative friendship with other countries including the US.

"PRC-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, PRC)

3. PRC-Russia Relations

The PRC and Russia share the same stance on the Iraq crisis and would continue to enhance consultations and cooperation to safeguard world peace, the presidents of the two countries said in a telephone conversation on March 18. Hu said the new PRC government would continue to give priority to relations with Russia and to consolidate bilateral strategic cooperation for common prosperity and development. PRC would make its due contribution to regional stability and world peace, Hu said. The two leaders also discussed bilateral relations and the Iraq crisis, said the report.

"PRC-Russia Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, PRC)

4. PRC-Pakistan Relations

Pakistani Prime Minister Zafarullah Jamali arrived in Beijing for a three-day official visit to discuss the US-led war on Iraq and bilateral issues with the PRC's new leaders. Jamali is the first foreign leader to visit the PRC since its new administration under President Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao took over last week. The visit comes as war rages in Iraq and follows Jamali's cancellation of a scheduled trip to the US this week in the face of bitter public opposition to the conflict.

"PRC-Pakistan Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, US)

5. PRC Pneumonia Deaths

PRC authorities have reported 31 deaths from an unusual form of pneumonia which experts fear could be linked to an ongoing worldwide outbreak of a mysterious respiratory disease. As PRC state media reported the deaths from a wave of atypical pneumonia which climaxed in February, Singapore reported its first fatality from a disease now known as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). It is strongly suspected that the earlier outbreak in southern PRC is the source of the current SARS problem which came to light when a US businessman died on March 13 in Hong Kong after traveling to the PRC and Vietnam. A total of 680 cases were reported by late February in Guangzhou, with deaths reaching 24, the Guangzhou Daily said.

"PRC Response to SARS" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 27, US) "PRC Pneumonia Deaths" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 26, US)

Japan

1. Japan Spy Satellite Launch

A Japanese H-2A rocket carrying the nation's first spy satellites has been launched in southern Japan. "The rocket was launched at 10:27 am (0127 GMT)," said Yoshihiro Nakamura, spokesman for the National Space Development Agency, minutes after the launch. The two satellites, the first of at least four in Japan's \$2 billion spy program, will give Tokyo its own means of watching its the DPRK's long-range missile development and suspected nuclear weapons program. They blasted off into clear but windy skies atop a black-and-orange H2-A rocket from Tanegashima Space Center, a sprawling complex of launch pads on this rugged island about 700 miles southwest of Tokyo. "It was a nearly flawless launch," said Shuichiro Yamanouchi, head of Japan's National Space Development Agency. Friday's launch marked a milestone for Japan's space program, which had previously been limited to strictly non-military missions. The satellites, which have both conventional photographic and radar imaging capabilities, are expected to be in use for about five years. If all goes well, they will orbit earth at a height of 250-370 miles and be able to supply images regardless of weather conditions below. The date for the subsequent launches has not been announced.

"Japan Spy Satellite" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 28, US) "Japan Spy Satellite Launch" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 28, US) "Japan Missile Defense" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 27, US) <https://nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/0303/MAR27.html#item7>

"Japan Spy Satellite Launch" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 27, US)

2. Japan's Reaction to the DPRK Missile

The Japanese Defense Agency is planning to enable the prime minister to order defense operation if there is a "sign" of missile launch and it is apparent that the adversary tries to attack Japan, as a part of the government's reaction to the DPRK's ballistic missile program. The Self-Defense Forces (SDF) Law stipulates in Section 76 that the prime minister may order defense operation if there is a threat of military attack from the outside. The government is also considering revising the law to authorize the SDF to launch of an anti-ballistic missile before defense operation, i.e. before being ordered to do so by the prime minister.

"Japan on DPRK Ballistic Missile" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 26, US) "Japan's Reaction to the DPRK Missile" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 25, JAPAN)

3. Japan on US-Led War in Iraq

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on Sunday underscored his support for the war on Iraq, describing the US as "an absolutely invaluable ally." Koizumi said on March 18 that he supports US President George W. Bush's ultimatum giving Iraqi President Saddam Hussein 48 hours to go into exile or face a US-led war. Koizumi stressed the importance of Japan-US alliance to Japan, said the report.

In stark contrast to Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's unequivocal support for the US, the four opposition parties lashed out Thursday against the US-led attack on Iraq. The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), Liberal Party, Japanese Communist Party (JCP) and Social Democratic Party (SDP) said the pre-emptive strike, which came without UN authorization, is in violation of international law. Many of the opposition lawmakers jeered as Koizumi addressed both chambers of the Diet to explain his decision to support the war.

"Japan on US-led Iraq War" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, JAPAN) "Japan-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, US) "Japan-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, PRC) <https://nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/0303/MAR24.html#item11>

"US on Japan role in US-Led War on Iraq" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, US)

4. Japan's Role in Iraq War

Japan and the US agreed Friday to cooperate in rebuilding postwar Iraq with help from the international community. Agreement was reached during a telephone conversation between Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and US President George W. Bush, officials said. Bush was also quoted as praising measures proposed by Japan to deal with contingencies arising from the attacks, including countering terrorism, monitoring the economy and rebuilding the country after war. Koizumi told Bush that Japan would do its utmost to assist the reconstruction process and stressed the importance of involving the international community. Japan's government is ready to provide tens of billions of yen for the reconstruction of postwar Iraq and for refugee aid, government officials said over the weekend. Some of the money will also be earmarked for nations neighboring Iraq to help them recover from the effects of the war, the sources added. The government is planning to use the official development assistance (ODA) budget to pay for the aid. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said Saturday a new law to deal with Iraq's reconstruction is unneeded, as long as the assistance is non-military in nature, such as providing food and medical aid. "These are essentials, needed before we even begin thinking about a new law," he said. However, Koizumi said he would consider a new law if Japan is asked to send Self-Defense Forces troops for postwar operations to maintain public order. "In that case I should seek approval of the Diet."

"US Ambassador on Japan's Role in Iraq War" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 28, US) "US on Japan Peace Keeping Troops in Iraq" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 27, US) <https://nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/0303/MAR27.html#item12>

"Japan's Roles in Iraqi Reconstruction" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 26, JAPAN) "Japan's Role in Iraq War" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 25, JAPAN)

<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/0303/MAR25.html#item13>

"Japan's Role in Iraq War" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, JAPAN)

5. Anti-War Protests in Japan

At least 516 local assemblies in Japan adopted resolutions or statements opposing hostilities in Iraq during their regular sessions in February and March. Many more assemblies are expected to vote on similar anti-war messages before their sessions wind up. Of the nation's 47 prefectures, more than half--26--have adopted anti-war resolutions or opinions. In February, the Yamanashi prefectural assembly adopted a written opinion calling for a peaceful resolution of the crisis. Officials said it was prompted by citizens' petitions. "Japan Anti-War Boycott" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 26, US) "Anti-War Protests in Japan" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, JAPAN) "Opinion Poll in Japan" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, JAPAN) <https://nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/0303/MAR24.html#item18>

6. Japan on US Iraq Embassy Closure Request

Japan has decided to reject a US request to close the Iraqi embassy here in order to maintain diplomatic channels, a foreign ministry official has said. "The Japanese government studied (the request) from its own perspective and decided not to close it down partly because it is not favourable to shut a diplomatic route," the official said. Japan's own embassy in Baghdad is shut and officials are concerned that closing the Iraqi mission in Tokyo would cut direct communication with Iraq about Japanese nationals in that country. "Japan on US Iraq Embassy Closure Request" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 26, US)

7. Iraq War's Effect on Japanese Economy

The US-led war on Iraq will have negative repercussions on Japan's economy, regardless of the duration of the conflict, according to projections of Daiwa Institute of Research. A prolonged war would deal a serious blow to the already faltering Japanese economy. But a short war could still drag down the economy through such volatile factors as retaliatory acts of terrorism, they say. "Iraq War's Effect on Japanese Economy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 25, JAPAN)

8. Japan Offensive Military System

Japan's hawkish defense chief has said the government was ready to examine whether Tokyo should possess an offensive military capability to counter future missile attacks. Asked if the government planned to consider the introduction of an offensive military capability, Shigeru Ishiba told the parliamentary defense committee: "It is worth considering it." "It is necessary to examine (the issue) from various points of view. If we stop considering it, we will be unable to take responsibility for the peace and independence of our country." The remarks are likely to spark further consternation and anger in neighbouring Asian countries such as the PRC and the DPRK. During the committee session, Ishiba also repeated his support for the introduction of the US-made Patriot anti-missile system. "It is in line with an exclusively defensive posture and the only means we are able to consider right now," Ishiba said, referring to the possibility of introducing a missile defense system. "There is no reason to deny it," he said. "We have to consider its cost performance and understanding of neighboring countries, but it is desirable to solve these problems and realize it." "Japan Offensive Military System" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 28, US) "Tokyo Governor Ishihara on Japan-DPRK Relation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 28, US) <https://nautilus.org/napsnet/dr/0303/MAR28.html#item9> "Kan on Missile Defense" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 24, JAPAN)

9. Japan on Northeast Asia Arms Race

Japanese defense chief Shigeru Ishiba has said that Japan will not jump into a nuclear arms race in Northeast Asia whatever the outcome of the DPRK's suspected nuclear weapons drive. "As the victim of nuclear attacks in 1945, Japan is opposed to nuclear proliferation and it does not consider possessing nuclear weapons," Shiregu said in an interview with South Korea's Joongang daily. Ishiba, who visits Seoul Friday for talks on the DPRK and Iraq, said Japan must remain under the protection of the nuclear umbrella provided by the US to ensure deterrence against the North's future atomic weapons. "It seems that North Korea is not merely bluffing concerning nuclear weapons but really wants to possess them," he said. "Japan on Northeast Asia Arms Race" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 28, US)

Russia

1. Russia Ballistic Missile Test

Russia's Space Forces and Strategic Rocket Forces successfully test-fired a Topol intercontinental ballistic missile on Thursday during a training exercise at the northern Plesetsk cosmodrome, the rocket forces' press service said. The rocket forces' and Defense Ministry press service refused to identify the target for the RS-12M missile, which blasted off during a command staff exercise. Test-launched missiles are usually directed to the Kamchatka Peninsula in the Russian Far East, and the Interfax news agency reported that the missile had landed at the Kura proving ground there on target. A Defense Ministry duty officer said that the missile was 18 years old. The missile was launched from a self-propelled truck mount, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported. "Russia Ballistic Missile Test" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 27, US)

2. Russia-Iraq Arms Sales?

Faced with a dispute that appears to severely threaten US-Russian relations, President Vladimir Putin has denied Washington's allegations that Russia sent banned military equipment to Iraq, the Kremlin said Tuesday. He and other officials also aimed to place a similar blemish on the US, suggesting that the US has similarly sold equipment to hostile nations and pointing out that the US once supplied anthrax and other biological agents to Iraq. Dmitry Trenin, an analyst with the Carnegie Endowment's Moscow office, said the public nature of the heated dispute suggested that "the honeymoon in Russian-US relations is ending." Underlining the sensitivity of the issue, the allegations have prompted a rash of sharp official denials and suggestions that the US raised the complaints as a smoke screen for its failure to quickly knock out key Iraqi installations. "Russia-Iraq Arms Sales?" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 28, US)

3. Russia on Iraq Humanitarian Responsibility

A top Russian diplomat said US and British forces should take responsibility for any humanitarian crisis that arises in Iraq. "The occupying forces are obliged to take care of the civilian population that finds itself under their control," Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Fedotov said in an interview published Thursday in the Vremya Novostei daily. "It is a military, forcible occupation, and it entails several obligations under international law and the Geneva Convention." Fedotov said Russia remained committed to the United Nations - sponsored oil-for-food program but said the war had held up deliveries of humanitarian aid, including Russian cargo ships docked in Syria. "At America's demand, customs inspectors handling humanitarian cargo have been withdrawn from Iraq and neighboring countries," Fedotov said.

"Russia on Iraq Humanitarian Responsibility" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 27, US)
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