

NAPSNET Week in Review 5 September, 2003

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNET Week in Review 5 September, 2003", NAPSNet Weekly Report, September 05, 2003, <https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-weekly/napsnet-week-in-review-5-september-2003/>

United States

1. US on DPRK Nuclear Test Threat

The US has delivered a veiled warning to the DPRK, saying it would face "consequences" if it made good on an alleged threat to conduct a nuclear test, as the DPRK staged a series of mass rallies this week in a show of public support for leader Kim Jong-Il. A senior US official, briefing reporters Thursday on condition of anonymity, stopped short of saying the US would pull out of a six-nation bid to end the nuclear crisis should such a test take place. But he hinted that such a move would deal a serious blow to hopes of finding a negotiated way out of the crisis which erupted last October.

"US on DPRK Nuclear Test Threat" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 5, 2003, US)

"US DPRK Nuclear Test Warning" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 4, 2003, US)

2. US DPRK Policy

The US State Department appears to have scored key victories over hard-liners in the Pentagon and elsewhere in the Bush administration by persuading the White House to shift its approach on the DPRK and Iraq. After initially insisting it would not offer the DPRK any "quid pro quos" to terminate its suspected nuclear weapons program, the Bush administration this week signaled it was willing to consider offering some incentives to Pyongyang. And after months of refusing to give the United Nations a major role in Iraq, the US this week said it would seek a new U.N. resolution to authorize a multinational force there, albeit under US command. In changing its approach on the DPRK, the White House appears to have resigned itself to the prospect that it is unlikely to persuade the DPRK to end its nuclear ambitions without giving it something in return.

"US DPRK Policy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 5, 2003, US)

"DPRK-US Diplomacy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 4, 2003, US)

3. Powell on US-ROK Relations

The US remains committed to a close relationship with South Korea, both as an ally in terms of security and as a partner in dealing with North Korea's programs for weapons of mass destruction, says Secretary of State Colin Powell. "There is absolutely no change or slackening in the commitment that the US has to the safety and security of our partner and ally in South Korea," Powell told the press September 3 after meeting with the Republic of Korea's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Yoon Young-Kwan.

Read the full transcript here:

"Powell on US-ROK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 5, 2003, US)

4. Carter on DPRK-US Standoff

Former President Jimmy Carter, who was credited with defusing the 1994 DPRK nuclear crisis, warned here today that the current standoff is the world's "greatest threat." "This paranoid nation and the US now are facing what I believe to be the greatest threat in the world to regional and global peace," Carter said. The Bush administration, which has avoided using the word "crisis" in referring to the DPRK's revival of its nuclear program, had no immediate comment on Carter's visit or message. Carter, who received the Nobel Peace Prize last year, met here today with Japan's prime minister, Junichiro Koizumi.

"Carter on DPRK-US Standoff" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 5, 2003, US)

Korean Peninsula

1. DPRK Kim Re-election

The DPRK's parliament re-elected Kim Jong Il the communist country's leader Wednesday and endorsed Pyongyang's decision to "increase its nuclear deterrent," spurring orchestrated celebrations by dancing housewives and loyal soldiers. The bespectacled Kim, 61, nodded nonchalantly from a platform as 670 legislators stood in unison, wildly clapped their hands and shouted hurras to voice unanimous support for his new five-year term as chairman of the DPRK's highest governing body, the National Defense Commission.

"DPRK Kim Re-election" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 3, 2003, US)

2. DPRK Cabinet Reshuffle

DPRK leader Kim Jong-Il formed a new cabinet in a sweeping reshuffle of the government's economic team that also affected key military posts. Kim appointed technocrat Pak Pong-Ju, a light-industry specialist, as prime minister, replacing Hong Song-Nam. Kim also replaced two of three vice premiers and sacked five ministers in charge of the state planning commission, and other key economic posts. Jo Myong-Rok, one of Kim's closest confidants, retained his job as first vice chairman of the DPRK's most powerful body, the National Defense Commission, which controls the North's 1.1-million military, the world's fifth largest. Kim, himself, was re-elected to a third five-year term as chairman of the all-powerful commission.

"DPRK Cabinet Reshuffle" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 3, 2003, US)

3. ROK-US on DPRK Diplomacy

Foreign Minister Yoon Young-kwan said Thursday that U.S. President George W. Bush understood the importance of the six-way talks and expressed his strong will to lead the talks to success. Before meeting with his U.S. counterpart, Colin Powell, Yoon visited the White House and had a 20-minute discussion with President Bush. Yoon also said that Bush was interested in ROK's economic situation, and asked about the national sentiment on DPRK. Powell, after his talks with Yoon, held a press conference and said that Washington and Seoul had a comprehensive DPRK policy and would be working toward a diplomatic solution to DPRK nuclear problem.

"ROK-US on DPRK Diplomacy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 5, 2003, ROK)

"ROK-Russia-PRC on US Role in DPRK Diplomacy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 2, 2003, US)

"ROK-US DPRK Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 2, 2003, US)

4. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Tactics

The DPRK's threat to build up its nuclear deterrent force is a pressure tactic aimed at giving it an edge in future nuclear crisis talks, the ROK's Unification Minister said. "The conflicting message is a sort of pressure tactic outside the negotiating table ahead of further talks," said Jeong Se-hyun, the ROK's top policymaker on relations with the DPRK, on Thursday. However, Jeong told ROK reporters that the DPRK would eventually return to the negotiating table.

"ROK on DPRK Nuclear Tactics" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 4, 2003, US)

"ROK on DPRK Diplomatic Strategy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 2, 2003, US)

5. ROK on DPRK KEDO Project

The ROK is opposed to scrapping a project to build advanced nuclear reactors in the DPRK while talks on the DPRK's nuclear crisis continue, a top policymaker said. The ROK would stand to lose 1.4 billion dollars including compensation payments to contractors should the project be abandoned, Unification Minister Jeong Se-Hyun said Thursday. "We have spent no less than 930 million dollars so far. If the project is terminated, we would be left with 1.4 billion dollars of losses," Jeong told journalists. "It would be better for the project to move on. And in this context, Japan is cautious (about killing off the project) as well," Jeong said.

"ROK on DPRK KEDO Project" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 4, 2003, US)

6. DPRK Nuclear Capabilities

Kim Jong Il endorsed Pyongyang's decision to "increase its nuclear deterrent," spurring orchestrated celebrations by dancing housewives and loyal soldiers. The bespectacled Kim, 61, nodded nonchalantly from a platform as 670 legislators stood in unison, wildly clapped their hands and shouted hurras to voice unanimous support for his new five-year term as chairman of the DPRK's highest governing body, the National Defense Commission.

"DPRK Nuclear Capabilities" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 4, 2003, US)

7. ROK-US Ammo Disposal

The Defense Ministry said Thursday that ROK and U.S. authorities had revised elements of their agreement on the disposal of outdated ammunition, which critics say is unfair for ROK. Signing the agreement to change the War Reserved Stock for Allies system were Choi Dong-jin, chief of the ministry's acquisition office, and Charles Campbell, U.S. Forces Korea chief of staff. The revision calls for a suspension of the normal methods of disposing outdated ammunition - burning or detonating it - and the construction of high-tech facilities to recover reusable components and safely treat the rest. According to the new agreement, U.S. will no longer be able to bring in for disposal here old ammunition from U.S. forces based outside of U.S. or ROK.

"ROK-US Ammo Disposal" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 5, 2003, ROK)

8. Yongsan Base Relocation

The ROK and US have begun to sketch a new "unified agreement" that will replace two agreements made in 1990 for the relocation of the Yongsan base. The two old pacts were subjects of controversy, as critics said they were unfair and perhaps illegal. The new agreement will be sent to the National Assembly for ratification this year. Both countries agreed at the fourth round of the meetings themed "Future of the Alliance Policy Initiative," which ended Thursday, that large portions of the 1990 agreements were unrealistic. ROK representative Cha Young-gu, chief policy-maker at the Defense Ministry, said that a fifth round of meetings would be held next month in Seoul to draft the new unified agreement, as well as agreements for implementation and engineering purposes.

"Yongsan Base Relocation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 5, 2003, ROK)

9. ROK Political Corruption

The ROK's chaebol, or conglomerates, declared today that they will no longer provide illegal political funds. The move by the Federation of Korean Industries, the nation's chaebol lobbying group, followed a series of corruption scandals involving politicians arrested or suspected of having received slush funds from businesses. The latest scandal involved SK Shipping, a unit of SK Group suspected of having offered tens of billions of won in slush funds to Kwon Roh-kap, an aide to former President Kim Dae-jung. Kwon was arrested on August 15 on charges of receiving 20 billion won (US\$17.1 million) from the Hyundai Group just before general elections in 2000. He was also suspected of receiving slush funds from SK. SK Group Chairman Son Kil-seung currently serves as head of FKI.

"ROK Political Corruption" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 5, 2003, US)

People's Republic of China

1. PRC on US-DPRK Diplomacy

US policy on the DPRK is the biggest obstacle to resolving the nuclear crisis in the Korean peninsula, the PRC's chief delegate to the six-nation talks on the stand-off said here. Asked by reporters what he thought was the main obstacle to progress, PRC Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi, said: "The American policy towards DPRK -- this is the main problem we are facing." The DPRK had said its expectations at last week's talks also involving the PRC, Japan, Russia and the ROK had been "betrayed" by "hostile" US policy.

"PRC on US-DPRK Diplomacy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 2, 2003, US)

2. PRC-US Relations

Citing shared concerns about the DPRK's nuclear weapons programs and other issues, Secretary of State Colin Powell said Friday US relations with the PRC are at their highest point in more than 30 years. Powell said relations have prospered despite continuing differences with the PRC over such issues as human rights, the PRC's proliferation activities and the continuing absence of political reform in that country. "The relations have improved for reasons that transcend all of these particulars," Powell said. "Neither we nor the PRC leaders believe that there is anything inevitable about our relationship - neither inevitably bad nor inevitably good." He suggested that common views on the DPRK have helped to bring the two sides together.

"PRC-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 5, 2003, US)

3. PRC Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Ratification

The PRC may soon ratify a global nuclear test ban brought some hope to a conference on the 1996 treaty as diplomats urged the US and the DPRK to stop blocking its enforcement. The PRC "seems ready to ratify" the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) Wolfgang Hoffmann, the secretary general of the three-day meeting, told AFP. "They seem ready to ratify. I got this impression from talks I had last July in Beijing with both sides, civilian and military," he added. The PRC is one of 12 countries, including the world's biggest nuclear power the US, whose refusal to sign or ratify the treaty is preventing it from entering into force. "The question is no longer whether China will sign the ratification document, but when," a source close to the conference told AFP. "PRC Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Ratification" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 3, 2003, US)

4. PRC People's Liberation Army Troop Reduction

The PRC's top military leader Jiang Zemin announced that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) will reduce its numbers by 200,000 troops before 2005 and put more focus on building a high-tech army, state press reported. Jiang told a meeting of the Central Military Commission (CMC) that the troop reductions would follow an earlier 500,000-man cut to military personnel between 1996 and 2000, Xinhua news agency said. According to the information office of the PLA, the demobilization would reduce the PRC's army to 2.3 million soldiers, while Western analysts said the cuts could bring the PRC's ground forces to as low as 1.8 million soldiers.

"PRC People's Liberation Army Troop Reduction" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 2, 2003, US)

5. Hong Kong Anti-Subversion Legislation

Hong Kong's government has withdrawn plans to introduce controversial security legislation which sparked the territory's worst political crisis since 1997, Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa said. Tung said Friday plans to revive the bill with a second round of public consultation later this month had been put on hold indefinitely because talks with community groups showed there was still widespread concern in the city over the law.

"Hong Kong Anti-Subversion Legislation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 5, 2003, US)

6. PRC Foreign Exchange

US President Bush said on Thursday that the PRC's currency policy was unfair and Washington would "deal with it accordingly" following inconclusive talks in Beijing. Bush, in an interview with CNBC, said Treasury Secretary John Snow used meetings in Beijing to "deliver a strong message from the administration that we expect our trading partners to treat our people fairly -- our producers and workers and farmers and manufacturers -- and we don't think we're being treated fairly when a currency is controlled by the government."

"US President Bush on PRC Currency" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 4, 2003, US)

"US Treasury Secretary Snow on PRC Foreign Exchange" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 5, 2003, US)

"APEC Forum" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 5, 2003, Japan)

"PRC Yuan Revaluation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 3, 2003, US)

"US on PRC Currency" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 2, 2003, US)

7. Taiwan War Games

Taiwan staged its biggest ever live-fire military wargames here, firing sophisticated missiles and mobilizing high-tech weaponry in a mock 'invasion' by the PRC. The military exercise, staged in the northeastern Ilan county and codenamed "Han Kuang 19" (Han Glory), was aimed at fully illustrating the defense capability of Taiwan's armed forces, the defense ministry said Thursday. "The all-out defense forces in Ilan area are deployed to simulate the People's Liberation Army's tactics and operational schemes of cross-Strait operations," the ministry said. Military officials said nearly all the modern weaponry Taiwan owns was mobilized in the 110-minute drill which was presided over by President Chen Shui-bian and televised live nationwide.

"Taiwan War Games" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 4, 2003, US)

8. Japan-PRC Mustard Gas Victim Compensation

Japan plans to pay about 100 million yen (857,000 dollars) to the relatives of a PRC man who died and others who were injured by mustard gas left by retreating Japanese troops in World War II, a report said. The government is considering offering financial support to a PRC medical team and "sympathy money" to the bereaved family of a man who died, the Yomiuri newspaper said, quoting Cabinet Office and foreign ministry sources. A PRC man who came in contact with the lethal gas died from massive burns last month. Some 32 victims remain in hospital.

"Japan-PRC Mustard Gas Victim Compensation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 2, 2003, US)

"PRC-Japan on Chemical Weapons" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 3, 2003, US)

9. PRC AIDS Policy

The PRC slammed an international rights group for "falsely" blaming government policy for a massive AIDS outbreak, and said it was determined to care for victims of the epidemic. "If some international organizations, based on some inaccurate information make irresponsible accusations against China, I think this will not go with the facts," foreign ministry spokesman Kong Quan said Thursday. "It is true that in some parts of Henan province there were some problems with blood collecting stations and it led to the spread of AIDS in that area. "The central government attaches great importance to this issue." Kong was referring to a damning report by New York-based Human Rights Watch which Wednesday said that the government was covering up the epidemic, playing down the numbers of people infected and implementing discriminatory policies against sufferers.

"PRC AIDS Policy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 4, 2003, US)

10. PRC Flood Victims

At least 10,000 homes have been destroyed and thousands of people victimized by floods and landslides in the PRC's northwestern Shaanxi province, and worse is on the way, state media reported. Thirty-two counties in the province -- a third of the total -- have been affected by floods since torrential rains began pelting the region on August 28, the Wenweipao newspaper reported. The situation remains serious, with 26 people killed so far and estimated economic losses reaching 550 million yuan (66 million US dollars). The heavy rain has caused water levels in rivers in the middle and northern parts of Shaanxi to rise.

"PRC Flood Victims" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 2, 2003, US)

11. Beijing Olympics Preparations

The PRC's Olympic organizers are ordering "polluting enterprises" in central Beijing to either renovate or move out of the area in preparation for the 2008 Summer Games, a senior organizing official said Thursday. Jiang Xiaoyu, deputy president of the Beijing Olympic organizing committee, said the measures were part of what he called a diligent attempt to cut pollution and improve the environment in Beijing before the games.

"Beijing Olympics Preparations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 4, 2003, US)

12. Tibet Dalai Lama Return

The Dalai Lama would willingly return to Tibet and end nearly half a century of exile if the PRC allowed him back "without preconditions", the spiritual leader said in a British newspaper interview. "I'm hopeful to see Tibet, to see my old place with my own eyes, and try to cool down the situation," the Dalai Lama, 68, told the left-wing Guardian newspaper in an interview published Friday. The Dalai Lama fled the Potala Palace for India in 1959 as PRC troops crushed an abortive uprising in Lhasa.

"Tibet Dalai Lama Return" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 5, 2003, US)

13. US on PRC Tibetan Railway

A high-altitude railway the PRC is building to Tibet is a ruse to increase control over the region, and does not even enjoy the support of Beijing's Ministry of Railways, US activists said here. The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) made the claim in a new 70-page report on the 1,142-kilometer (713-mile) railway to the Tibetan capital of Lhasa, just days before Tibet's spiritual leader the Dalai Lama is due to visit the US. "This is another example of Communist central planning in Tibet that puts Sino-centric security and development before the interests of the Tibetan people, most of whom will not benefit from a railway under the present conditions," said John Ackerly, ICT President. "This railway not only lacks broad support among the Tibetan people, but it also lacks the support of the PRC Ministry of Railways," he said.

"US on PRC Tibetan Railway" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 2, 2003, US)

14. PRC SARS Transmission Research

New research has added weight to the theory a SARS-like virus jumped from animals to humans in south PRC, highlighting fears of another outbreak of the deadly disease. Scientists in Hong Kong and the PRC's southern Guangdong province compared samples from SARS patients with a SARS-like coronavirus taken from animals eaten as delicacies, including rodent-like palm civets, in a live animal market in Shenzhen. They concluded that the animals had a coronavirus that was 99.8 percent identical to the virus that causes Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome in people, Science journal reported in this week's edition.

"PRC SARS Transmission Research" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 5, 2003, US)

15. PRC-Philippines on Spratly Islands

The Philippine and the PRC governments today pushed for a joint exploration and development of the much-contested Spratly Island. This developed as both governments commence bilateral talks to discuss the possibilities of enhancing the vast resources of the cluster of islands in Palawan. In a news conference in the recently convened Association of Asian Parliaments for Peace (AAPP), House Speaker Jose de Venecia said the joint exploration and development would even extend to the South China Sea. "We have also agreed on drafting a common code of conduct in the South China Sea," he added.

"PRC-Philippines on Spratly Islands" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 2, 2003, US)

Japan

1. Japan-DPRK Relations

Japan's Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi said here Tuesday that Japan will try to hold bilateral talks with DPRK on the abduction issue, even outside the six-nation framework to resolve the nuclear problem. During bilateral talks held on the sidelines of the Beijing meeting, DPRK delegates expressed their hope the abduction issue could be resolved on the basis of the Pyongyang Declaration that was signed between Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and DPRK leader Kim Jong Il at their historic Sept. 17, 2002, summit meeting.

"Japan-DPRK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 5, 2003, Japan)

2. Japan-PRC Relations

A PRC warship will make a port call in Japan for the first time since the Communists took over in 1949. In addition, a Maritime Self-Defense Force vessel and its crew will pay a visit to the Middle Kingdom. Dates of both visits will be determined later. The agreement to exchange port calls by ships from the two nation's navies was made Wednesday between Defense Agency Director-General Shigeru Ishiba and PRC Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan. The meeting was the first between Japanese and PRC defense ministers in five years.

"Japan-PRC Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 5, 2003, Japan)

3. Japan-DPRK Relations over DPRK Passenger-Cargo Ship

With repairs apparently made, the DPRK passenger-cargo ship Man Gyong Bong-92 has been cleared to dock today in Niigata. The transport ministry said it had received a report from the ship's agent Tuesday night attesting that safety violations detected by Japanese authorities the last time the ship was in port late last month have been corrected. The 9,672-ton vessel left its home port of Wonsan early Wednesday with 197 people on board, including 74 crew members, and is expected to dock today at around 1 p.m., about four hours later than initially scheduled, sources said. However, before the vessel is allowed to dock, it must undergo another thorough Port State Control inspection by the ministry.

"Japan-DPRK Relations over DPRK Passenger-Cargo Ship" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 5, 2003, Japan)

4. Japan DPRK Ferry

A controversial DPRK ferry left here on schedule after Japanese officials confirmed the repair of defects which had delayed its previous departure nine days ago. The Man Gyong Bong-92 left the port Friday on the Sea of Japan (East Sea) coast, 250 kilometres (155 miles) north of Tokyo, for its home port of Wonsan in North Korea. As the ship prepared to depart around 10:00 am (0100 GMT), dozens of the 260 passengers lined up on the decks to wave small DPRK flags at members of the pro-Pyongyang General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (Chongryong) who were seeing them off. From the opposite side of the port, right-wing groups staged protests against the DPRK ship.

"Japan DPRK Ferry" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 5, 2003, US)

"DPRK Ferry Japan Port Call" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 4, 2003, US)

5. Japan Domestic Economy

Japan needs to step up efforts to tackle its underlying economic woes because big risks to recovery remain despite an improved outlook, the International Monetary Fund said on Friday. "The economy remains vulnerable to significant downside risks, notably those associated with fragilities in corporate and financial sector balance sheets," the IMF warned in its annual review of the world's second-largest economy.

"Japan Domestic Economy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 5, 2003, US)

6. Koizumi Post-Surgery Recovery

Japan Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi had a benign polyp removed from his colon following a health check, the government said. A statement issued by the office of the prime minister's secretary said the prime minister underwent surgery to remove a two-centimetre (four fifths of an inch) colon polyp at the International Medical Centre of Japan. "According to the assigned physician, as a result of the checkup, a benign pedunculated (stalk-shaped) polyp was found in the sigmoid colon. After a discussion between the prime minister and the physician, the polyp was removed," the statement said.

"Koizumi Post-Surgery Recovery" (NAPSNet Daily Report, September 3, 2003, US)

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