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United States

1. US Anti-terror War

US Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld yesterday held out the possibility that US commandos will still be in Afghanistan next year hunting down Taliban and al Qaeda fighters. Rumsfeld told the Senate Armed Services Committee that one purpose of President Bush's request for US\$10 billion advance for the war against terrorism is to fund operations in Afghanistan in fiscal 2003, which begins October 1st. The US has spent \$7 billion in the war's first four months.

"US Anti-terror War" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 6, US)

2. US Domestic Politics

Top US White House adviser on Asia Torkel Patterson has resigned his post just weeks before President George W. Bush makes a major trip to the region. Torkel served as the National Security Council's senior director for Asian affairs for less than one year. He left his position "for personal reasons" a week ago, an NSC spokesperson said.

"US Domestic Politics" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 5, US)

3. US-Philippines Anti-terror War

US troops are to be barred from combat and unilateral action during joint counter-extremist operations in the southern Philippines, according to a draft agreement set to be signed by the two governments. The "terms of reference" would allow the US armed forces to insert 160 Special Forces troops on the island of Basilan. Philippine officials said that it would take effect when signed by Filipino Vice President Teofisto Guingona, the concurrent foreign secretary, and Robert Fitts, Charge d'affaires of the US embassy here.

"US-Philippines Anti-terror War" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 7 US)

"US-Philippines Anti-terror War" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 6, US)

"US-Philippines Anti-terrorism" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 5, US)

4. US-Russia Nuclear Diplomacy

US Secretary of State Colin L. Powell said today that the US expected to meet Russia's demand for a "legally binding" agreement on reducing nuclear warheads. "We do expect that as we codify this framework, it will be something that will be legally binding, and we are examining different ways in which this can happen," Secretary Powell stated. Powell did not address another Russian demand, that the US destroy any excess warheads and not simply store them as the Bush administration has proposed. Russian Colonel General Yuri Baluyevsky, first deputy chief of staff of Russia's armed forces on Wednesday enthusiastically welcomed the US government's willingness to codify proposed nuclear arms cuts and said the deal could be reached by the time President Bush visits Russia in May.

"US-Russia Nuclear Diplomacy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 6, US)

5. International Missile Conference

Several nations, including India and Pakistan, are meeting in Paris for two days to help produce a set of international guidelines aimed at curbing the proliferation of ballistic missiles. Gerard Errera, the French Foreign Ministry's deputy director of political affairs, said in opening the conference February 7 that he hoped the 'International Code of Conduct against the Proliferation of Ballistic Missiles' would become an important instrument in the quest for world stability and peace.

"International Missile Conference" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 7 US)

Korean Peninsula

1. DPRK-US Diplomatic Relations

The DPRK responded to Bush's "axis of evil" comment by calling the US an "empire of (the) devil." The Korea Central News Agency stated that Bush's proposed defense budget increase for next year showed the US wanted to flex its military muscles. The KCNA also expressed that the US already had the largest number of weapons of mass destruction in the world and wanted more. DPRK UN envoy Pak Gil Yon said on Thursday that his nation was ready to resume talks with the US at any time despite President Bush lumping it with Iraq and Iran as part of an "axis of evil."

"DPRK-US Diplomatic Relations " (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 8, US)

"US-DPRK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 8, PRC)

"DPRK Response to US," (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 5, ROK)

2. DPRK Missile Issue

In testimony before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Tuesday, US Secretary of State Colin Powell said that the US government is dissatisfied with the DPRK's continuous development and export of missiles, despite the DPRK's agreement with the moratorium on missile testing until 2003. The US is particularly concerned that the DPRK's Rodong missiles, exported to Iran, threaten US troops in the Middle East, and the missile technology transferred to Pakistan complicates India-Pakistan relations.

"DPRK Missile Issue" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 7 ROK)

3. DPRK-US Relations

At a hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Powell argued that Bush's identification of the DPRK as part of an "axis of evil" was justifiable, but that the move was not a signal of imminent military action against one of those states. Striking back at the Bush administration, the DPRK Foreign Ministry warned, "This situation compels the DPRK to further increase its independent defense capabilities."

"DPRK-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 7 ROK)

"DPRK-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 6, US)

"US-ROK relations," (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 5, ROK)

4. DPRK-US Prospect for War

The US Department of Defense posted a report on January 30 on the US Center for Strategic and International Studies' (CSIS) website entitled "Estimate of North Korean Actions and Intentions Involving Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Weapons." The report states that the most likely large-scale regional war in the near future, which could involve the US will be centered on the Korean peninsula.

"DPRK-US Prospect for War " (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 8, US)

5. ROK-DPRK-US Diplomatic Relations

ROK President Kim Dae-Jung appealed for international efforts to stop mounting tensions with the DPRK from turning into a new conflict. "Inter-Korean ties are at a standstill now. We have to think about the horrendous damage a war on the Korean Peninsula would bring," Kim told a ceremony to swear in new vice ministers on Tuesday. "We cannot subject our 70 million people to threats of war. We must relax tensions through inter-Korean dialogue and at least stop the situation from developing into a war. If inter-Korean relations deteriorate, then our economic basis falls into trouble," said President Kim.

"ROK's View of DPRK-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 5, US)

"ROK-DPRK-US Diplomatic Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 7 US)

6. DPRK WMD Arsenal

The DPRK is thought to have completed tests of the Taepodong I missiles, which have a firing range of 2,000-2,500 km. Development of Taepodong II, which has a greater range of 6,700 km and could be utilized as an inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM), is thought to be underway. As for chemical weapons, the ROK's 2000 Defense White Paper said the DPRK has 2,500 to 5,000 tons of chemical weapons in stock, which were produced by eight plants, and include nerve agents.

"DPRK WMD Arsenal" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 8, US)

7. DPRK Defectors on International Food Aid

Three DPRK defectors claimed on Friday that international food aid is not reaching the starving and the government is resorting to elaborate schemes to fool UN monitors. The defectors, who gave testimony at an international conference on human rights in the DPRK stated that millions of dollars worth of food aid is being stockpiled in mountain military complexes and used to feed soldiers and the ruling elite.

"DPRK Defectors on International Food Aid " (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 8, US)

8. ROK Domestic Politics

ROK President Kim Dae-jung, less than three weeks before US President Bush visits for talk, replaced foreign minister Han Seung-soo with vice foreign minister Choi Sung-hong. The ROK Blue House stated, "The decision has nothing to do with Bush's toughened stance against Pyongyang. Han's replacement is simply part of last week's cabinet reshuffle, which was related more to domestic politics."

"ROK Domestic Politics" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 6, US)

"ROK Domestic Politics," (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 5, US)

9. ROK Anti-Bush Rally

ROK activists staged anti-US protests and attacked US President George W. Bush for heightening tension on the Korean peninsula. Civic and religious groups also issued statements Wednesday opposing Bush's planned visit to Seoul on February 19. The protestors held up slogans reading "No Bush. No war!" "We oppose Bush's visit," they said in a statement which also urged Bush to scrap his "hostile" policy towards the DPRK.

"ROK Anti-Bush Rally " (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 8, US)

"ROK Anti-US Protests" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 6, US)

10. ROK-US Relations

US ambassador to the ROK Thomas Hubbard Wednesday voiced "strong support" for President Kim Dae-jung's policy of pursuing rapprochement with DPRK, in an apparent bid to refute reports about signs of a widening gap between US and ROK policies toward the DPRK. After US President George W. Bush labeled the DPRK part of an "axis of evil" and State Department spokesman Richard Boucher criticized ROK's "sunshine policy," there has been speculation that the policies of ROK and US may not be in alignment. However, Hubbard said the Bush administration fully supports President Kim's engagement policy.

"ROK-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 7 ROK)

"US-DPRK Relations," (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 5, ROK)

11. ROK's Effort for Peace

The US plans to help the DPRK gain access to key international lending organizations if the DPRK returns to security talks with the US. "North Korea will be given various economic benefits, such as development funds from international financial institutions, if it resumes dialogue with the United States," said Yim Sung-joon, senior presidential secretary for foreign policy and national security. Yim said the resumption of talks to discuss DPRK's weapons of mass destruction, including missiles, will help the U.S. and DPRK normalize their political relations.

"ROK's Effort for Peace" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 7 ROK)

12. ROK Fighter Jets

The ROK said it will increase its multi- billion-dollar budget to buy 40 fighter jets. Officials said Friday the government decided to readjust the US\$3.2 billion dollar project which had been put on hold momentarily this week after the final bids were deemed too high. An official of the ministry said the decision would come around early April.

"ROK Fighter Jets" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 8, US)

13. ROK-PRC Relations

PRC President Jiang Zemin will not be attending the opening ceremony of the 2002 World Cup in Seoul. The ROK had desired Jiang to make the trip as a fitting tribute to the 10th anniversary of the opening of diplomatic ties between the PRC and the ROK.

"ROK-PRC Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 7 Japan)

14. DPRK-US Lightwater Reactors

Three US House of Representative members: Benjamin Gilman, R-N.Y., Christopher Cox, R-Calif., and Rep. Edward Markey, D-Mass., are calling on US President Bush to reconsider a 1994 US commitment to help provide the DPRK with two light water nuclear reactors. In a letter to Bush, the three representatives express that the US commitment needs to be reevaluated in light of the threats Bush identified in his State of the Union address last month.

"DPRK-US Lightwater Reactors" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 8, US)

People's Republic of China

1. PRC Perspectives on "Axis of Evil"

PRC Foreign Ministry spokesperson Kong Quan said on February 4 that the PRC disapproves of the use of such words as the "axis of evil" in international relations. The PRC always holds that anti-terrorism campaigns should be based on irrefutable evidence, and anti-terrorism attacks should not be expanded arbitrarily, said Kong. An article carried by the PRC's Xinhua news agency said, "No small number of people suspect that by labeling Iran, Iraq and North Korea as an 'axis of evil' the US seeks to prepare public opinion for possible strikes against those countries under the banner of anti-terrorism."

"PRC Perspectives on 'Axis of Evil' Theory " (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 8, PRC)

"PRC Response to 'Axis of Evil'"(NAPSNet Daily Report, February 5, US)

2. PRC-US Diplomatic Relations

US CIA chief George Tenet testified before Congress that the PRC's recent acquiescence in the US anti-terror campaign did not mean it had taken its eye from its prime goal: to emerge as a major Asian power and challenge US strategic preeminence in Asia. Tenet warned, "China is developing an increasingly competitive economy and building a modern military force with the ultimate objective of asserting itself as a great power in East Asia."

"PRC-US Diplomatic Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 7 US)

3. PRC-US Relations

Secretary of State Colin Powell stated that US-PRC relations are developing "rather smoothly" ahead of President George W. Bush's visit to Beijing this month. "The relationship is back on an improving track," Powell told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Powell stressed that the US and the PRC should cooperate in areas where they had common interests, including the PRC entry into the World Trade Organization, peace efforts on the Korean peninsula and battling HIV/AIDS.

"PRC-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 6, US)

4. PRC-US Relations

PRC Vice Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing said on February 4 in Washington that proper handling of the Taiwan issue is the key to developing a constructive relationship of cooperation between PRC and the US. "It is our hope that the US side will handle the Taiwan question from a strategic and long-term perspective, honor its relevant commitments and support China's efforts at peaceful reunification," he said.

"PRC-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 8, PRC)

5. Cross-Straits Relations

Top Taiwan official on mainland affairs Deng Chen-chung, vice chairman of the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), said yesterday in Washington that economic and trading disputes between Taiwan and the PRC should be resolved under the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Deng stated, "We should make good use of the communication channels set by the WTO in an effort to better deal with the cross-strait trading problems." The PRC stated on February 6 that its policy toward Taiwan has not changed despite a report that it has abandoned a key precondition for talks on establishing direct links with the island. The Washington Post quoted an unnamed official as saying the PRC was willing to drop its requirement that Taiwan recognize the "one-China principle" before opening the "three links," but an official at the cabinet's Office of Taiwan Affairs said there had been no change in policy.

"Cross-Straits Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 7 US)

"Cross-Straits Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 6, US)

6. Taiwan Military Development

New Taiwan Defense Minister Tang Yao-ming said Taiwan would cut its military personnel and develop modern weaponry to counter the PRC with more efficient armed forces. The ministry planned to cut military manpower by an average 15,000 servicemen every year from 2003 to 2006, said Tang, who was sworn in Friday after stepping down from the post of Chief of the General Staff. Taiwan currently has some 370,000 servicemen. The government will instead concentrate on developing more modern weaponry to raise the island's combat capability, Tang said. The US in April approved the most comprehensive arms package to Taiwan since 1992, including eight diesel-engined submarines, 12 P-3C submarine-hunting aircraft, and four Kidd-class frigates.

"Taiwan Military Development" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 6, US)

7. PRC Economic Growth

US investment bank Lehman Brothers forecast on Friday that the PRC's economy will grow six percent annually over the next 20 years and become the world's second largest after the US by 2030. Lehman Brothers's senior economist Robert Subbaraman announced, "We're optimistic that China will achieve a six percent growth trajectory over the next 20 years and, in our estimates, will rise to become the second largest economy in the world before 2030."

"PRC Economic Growth," (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 5, US)

Japan

1. Japanese New Foreign Minister

The appointment of Yoriko Kawaguchi as Japan's new Foreign Minister was a surprise to many and a question mark to others. Kawaguchi has already earned her stripes in the minds of many top ministry officials because of her deftness in negotiating and mediating among diplomats at international conference on the issue of global warming in conjunction with the Kyoto Protocol. Others, however, said it is not clear how diligently Kawaguchi will press to carry out reforms in the ministry that Makiko Tanaka had struggled to initiate.

"Japanese New Foreign Minister" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 6, Japan)

2. Japan Domestic Politics

Recent opinion polls show that public support for Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's cabinet has plummeted after he fired foreign minister Makiko Tanaka. The Asahi Shimbun said Monday that the cabinet's approval rating fell to 49 percent. The figure compared with the 72 percent approval rate registered in the previous survey taken on January 26 and 27 two days before Tanaka was dismissed.

"Japan Domestic Politics," (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 5, US)

3. Japan-ROK Diplomatic Relations

Japan's Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi is planning to visit the ROK right in late March. A Japanese foreign ministry spokesperson said, "The prime minister has been saying he wants to go as soon as possible. But when he's going to go has not been decided. It's not as if he's definitely going to go, but he's said he wants to go so we are trying to arrange it." Koizumi is expected to meet ROK President Kim Dae Jung and other ROK leaders during his trip, which will be aimed at improving relations ahead of the World Cup.

"Japan-ROK Diplomatic Relations," (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 5, US)

4. Japan-DPRK Relations

Japan Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said that Japan would work patiently towards restoring diplomatic ties with the DPRK despite the hard line taken by US President George W. Bush. "Through this effort, we will aim to settle security and humanitarian issues," he said. Koizumi made no mention of the DPRK foreign ministry statement issued late February 5 which charged that Japan's launch of an H-2A rocket this week was a covert attempt to bolster its arms program.

"Japan-DPRK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 6, US)

5. Japan-Russia Diplomatic Relations

Japan's new Foreign Minister, Yoriko Kawaguchi, and her Russian counterpart, Igor Ivanov, began talks centering on territorial issues and the fight against global terrorism. The Ivanov-Kawaguchi meeting is the first full-fledged foreign ministerial conference between Japan and Russia since Koizumi took office in April last year. On February 8 Ivanov met with Koizumi and the two pledged continued efforts to find a solution to the long-drawn territorial dispute which has prevented the two nations from signing a post-war peace treaty.

"Japan-Russia Diplomatic Relations," (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 5, US)

6. Japan-ROK Relations

Japanese and ROK governments on Wednesday reached a broad agreement on the framework for a joint research project for deepening both nations' understanding of their shared history, sources said. The project, designed to promote joint history research by Japan and the ROK, will consist of a history research committee comprised of 10 historians from both countries.

"Japan-ROK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 7 Japan)

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