

NAPSNET Week in Review 8 March, 2002

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United States

1. Global Nuclear Material

International researchers have compiled what they say is the world's most complete database of lost, stolen and misplaced nuclear material -- depicting a world awash in weapons-grade uranium and plutonium that nobody can account for. "It truly is frightening," Lyudmila Zaitseva, a visiting fellow at Stanford University's Institute for International Studies, said on March 6. "I think this is the tip of the iceberg." Zaitseva also stated that over the past 10 years, at least 88 pounds (40 kg) of weapons-usable uranium and plutonium had been stolen from poorly protected nuclear facilities in the former Soviet Union. "This is hot stuff. If you steal 20 kilograms of that material, you can build a nuclear weapon," Zaitseva noted. "Global Nuclear Material" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 6, US)

2. US Covert Anti-terror War

US democratic senator Joseph Lieberman said on Sunday that US action against Iraq might begin without notification to US Congress to allow US President George W. Bush "to employ surprise in attacking or going against the leadership of Iraq. I think you have also got to give the commander in chief the right to employ surprise in attacking or in going against the leadership of Iraq," Lieberman expressed. Lieberman is one of 10 leading members of Congress who have publicly urged Bush to make Iraq the next target in the US war on terrorism.

"US Covert Anti-terror War" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 5, US)

Korean Peninsula

1. Inter-Korean Relations

The DPRK has disapproved or postponed all upcoming ROK visits to DPRK except for those relating to economic cooperation. According to the Ministry of Unification, the DPRK has disapproved two cultural cooperation groups' visit, scheduled for March 5 and 9 respectively, and notified the Korean Sharing Movement and National Episcopal Committee for the Reconciliation of Korean People to cancel their visit on March 26.

"Inter Korean Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 7, ROK)

2. Inter-Korean Relations

The ROK will not offer an official proposal of talks to the DPRK unless the DPRK sounds ROK out about improving inter-Korean relations first, ROK Unification Ministry sources said on March 11. "We believe that it is inappropriate to make another offer without an assurance of the North's acceptance." The ministry already has mapped out a plan to provide humanitarian aid in return for that acceptance.

"Inter-Korean Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 5, ROK)

3. ROK Fighter Jet Bidding

ROK military intelligence is investigating local agents of US and French contenders for a major fighter jet contract. ROK firms representing Boeing of the US and Dassault Aviation SA of France are under investigation after the publication of "military secrets" linked to the deal, an ROK spokesperson for the Defence Security Command (DSC) said March 6. "The investigation focused on the agents which have been mentioned by newspapers in connection with the leak of classified documents."

"ROK Fighter Jet Bidding" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 6, US)

"ROK Air Force Project" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 6, ROK)

"ROK Fighter Project" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 5, US)

"ROK Air Force Project" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 5, ROK)

4. DPRK Missile Facilities

Stratfor.com, a US intelligence analysis Web site unveiled satellite pictures on Friday of a DPRK missile engine testing systems in Hwadae-gun, Musuadan-ri, North Hamgyong province, along with a report on developments in the DPRK's missile program. The pictures were taken last December by Quick Bird, a US commercial satellite. Stratfor predicted a high possibility of DPRK test firing its latest Daepodong missile by late 2003.

"DPRK Missile Facilities" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 8, ROK)

5. ROK-DPRK-US Relations

ROK officials said on March 4 that ROK and US military authorities are pushing for a joint study to develop a comprehensive strategy to cope with DPRK missiles and weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). The government-level study will be aimed at working out concrete measures for their joint efforts to reduce the DPRK's military threat and proliferation of weapons. The plan indicates that the ROK is willing to take a more active role in addressing concerns about the DPRK's nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

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

6. DPRK-US Relations

US General Thomas A. Schwartz, commander of the ROK-US Combined Forces stated that the DPRK's economy depends on weapons sales and the DPRK has increased exports of missile technology. However, in his report to the US Senate Armed Services Committee, the general also assured the senators that there was no evidence of direct DPRK involvement in international terrorism and that the DPRK has kept its promise so far of halting missile tests until 2003.

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

7. DPRK-US Diplomatic Relations

A report carried by the DPRK news agency KCNA stated that the DPRK would respond to US calls for dialogue only after the Bush administration recognized the DPRK's political system and returned to policies of the Clinton government. The DPRK dismissed US calls for talks as "camouflaged big stick logic and trojan horse tactics. "North Korea's stand on dialogue is to get its political system recognized by the US, not to allow itself to be disarmed or abandon its system," said the KCNA.

"DPRK-US Diplomatic Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 5, US)

8. ROK-US Relations

ROK Deputy Foreign Minister Lee Tae-sik will travel to the US on Thursday to discuss with US officials ways to restart dialogue with the DPRK. During his four-day stay, Lee will focus on coordinating the two governments' policies on the DPRK in meetings with James Kelly, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs.

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

9. ROK-US Relations

US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld will postpone his planned visit to Seoul, originally scheduled for the end of this month. "Mr. Rumsfeld put off his visit because of the recent deaths of American soldiers in Afghanistan and the selection of the ROK's next generation fighter jet project," said a source from the US Forces Korea. "The visit may be postponed until after the selection is made in mid April."

"ROK-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 6, ROK)

10. ROK Human Rights Situation

A report released by the US State Department Monday highlighted what it called human rights abuses in ROK. It cited indirect government pressure on the press, human trafficking and infringement upon civil liberties under the National Security Law. This year's report concludes that the ROK government "generally respects the human rights of its citizens," but it added, "Problems remain in some areas, despite some improvements." It listed women's issues, domestic violence, rape, child abuse and workers' rights, as well as legal and societal discrimination against ethnic minorities.

"ROK Human Rights Situation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 6, ROK)

11. ROK-Japan Joint History Study

Japanese officials announced that Japan and the ROK will start a joint historical study this month in a move to resolve the issue of Japanese history textbooks. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda stated at a news conference, "We will set up a joint historical research committee made up of experts." Japan's Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said, "There are differing views of history among various academics and research should be conducted in depth. It would be good if this creates a mood for both sides to deepen their friendship while recognizing their differences."

"ROK-Japan Joint History Study" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 5, US)

"Japanese Textbook Issue" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 5, ROK)

12. PRC-DPRK-ROK Route

The ROK, the DPRK, and the PRC are talking about allowing PRC tourists to travel to the ROK through the DPRK during the World Cup soccer games from May 31 to June 30. If the idea materializes, it would be the first case of group tourists traveling to ROK via the DPRK. PRC foreign minister, Tang Jiaxuan, confirmed that the three countries are discussing the matter.

"We can expand the talks to include Japan and other countries if the need arises," he said.

"PRC-DPRK-ROK Route" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 7, ROK)

13. DPRK Illegal Drug Problem

US State Department on Friday reported the DPRK as a country of concern in regard to the production or and smuggling of illicit drugs. The department's "International Narcotics Control Strategy Report" said that few narcotics seizures with a clear DPRK connection have been found. It added, however, "Most observers continued to view narcotics coming from North Korea as a significant problem for Japan and Taiwan." It also said that it was possible that the DPRK government "has chosen to sponsor illegal activities as a matter of state policy."

"DPRK Illegal Drug Problem" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 5, ROK)

People's Republic of China

1. PRC Defense Budget

The PRC has defended its decision to hike its military budget by 17.6% this year, saying its defense spending is still relatively low compared with that of developed countries. "China is the most populous country in the world and has a land border of 20,000 kilometers and a sea border of 18,000 kilometers. (But) the amount of China's defence spending is only a small percentage of its GDP. The PRC's openly-stated military budget is expected to grow between 15% and 17% annually between 2001 and 2005.

"PRC Defense Budget" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 8, PRC)

"PRC Military Spending" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 7, US)

"PRC Military Spending" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 5, US)

2. Taiwan-US "Defense Summit"

The US State Department said it has, for the first time in decades, granted a visa to a Taiwanese defense minister who plans to attend a defense conference in the US. The minister, Tang Yiau-ming, will take part in a Florida forum billed as a "defense summit." Tang is expected to meet with US defense officials, including Deputy Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, who is expected to address the conference. PRC Foreign Ministry spokesperson Kong Quan stated, "We express our strong dissatisfaction and firm opposition to this." It will bring about harm to both Sino-US relations and cross-Strait relations."

"Taiwan-US 'Defense Summit'" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 7, US)

"Taiwan-US Defense 'Summit'" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 6, US)

3. PRC Annual Session of National Parliament

At the annual session of the national parliament, PRC foreign minister Tang Jiaxuan pledged to expand "constructive and cooperative" relations with the US. "We are ready to work together with the US side to narrow differences, expand common ground, increase exchanges and promote cooperation in order to further push forward the constructive and cooperative ties," Tang told journalists on March 13. PRC Premier Zhu Rongji opened the annual session of the national parliament by warning of an "arduous" year ahead as the global economic slowdown and the PRC's entry to the WTO take their toll. Zhu's address listed a wide range of problems facing his government -- from economic woes to ethnic separatism and corruption. Zhu also expressed that the PRC has emerged with new clout as a member of the global anti-terrorism coalition.

"PRC View on International Situation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 8, PRC)

"PRC Annual Session of National Parliament" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 6, US)

4. PRC Test Ban Pact

The PRC and Iran are balking at full cooperation with a UN organization monitoring the international nuclear test ban treaty, raising fears that this could further undermine the embattled pact. The two countries have stopped providing complete or timely data to the monitoring group in recent months US officials and diplomatic sources said.

"PRC Test Ban Pact" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 8, US)

5. PRC Domestic Politics

PRC Vice Premier Wen Jiabao, the man regarded as the PRC's incoming prime minister made a surprise public appearance this week meeting with lawmakers and in front of foreign media. Aides ushered him out after his meeting with deputies to the National People's Congress. The Hong Kong Economic Times wrote Friday, "Having the usually low-profile Wen Jiabao meet the media is an obvious message about China's personnel arrangement."

"PRC Domestic Politics" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 8, US)

6. PRC Domestic Anti-terror Force

The PRC has set up an anti-terrorism network of paramilitary police in 31 provincial capitals and in counties deemed to be at high risk of terrorist attacks. The network, which includes mobile rapid-response teams and anti-hijacking units, was set up to "curb increasing terrorist threats," the official China Daily said.

"PRC Domestic Anti-terror Force" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 8, US)

7. PRC-Japanese Relations

On March 6 at a press conference during the 5th session of the 9th National People's Congress, PRC Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan answered a Japanese correspondent's question related to the mystery boat sunken last year in East China Sea. Tang explained that the PRC has requested Japan fully respect the rights as well as concerns of the PRC and refrain from taking action that might lead to the aggregation and complication of the situation. Tang also said that the PRC will continue to adopt necessary measures to safeguard, in accordance with law, the sovereign rights related to its jurisdiction over the exclusive economic zone.

Moreover, as a result of the PRC's representations, the Japanese investigation boat has cut short its investigation and withdrawn from the area, Tang said.

"PRC-Japanese Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 8, PRC)

8. PRC Response to US Human Rights Report

A PRC Foreign Ministry spokesperson on March 5 expressed, "strong dissatisfaction and firm opposition" to US criticism of the PRC's human rights conditions. Spokesperson Kong Quan told a regular briefing that the US State Department's annual report on the PRC's human rights situation "has made up stories, confused right and wrong, attacked China's judicial system, policies on ethnic minorities and human rights conditions."

"PRC Response to US Human Rights Report" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 8, PRC)

9. Taiwan-Philippines Fighter Jets

Philippines Foreign Minister Teofisto Guingona announced March 5 that the Philippines is negotiating to buy 24 F5-E fighter jets from Taiwan for a token fee to strengthen its air force. Taiwan also wants Taiwanese pilots to train in the Philippines, as Taiwan reportedly does not have enough air space to train its pilots in 10 squadrons of ultra-fast jets including F-16s and the Mirage 2000-5. A senior Philippines diplomat said that the deal for the Philippines to buy surplus fighter jets from Taiwan will not affect Philippine-PRC relations. "Whatever the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Department of National Defense decides with Taiwan, the Department of Foreign Affairs will see to it that there will be no violation of the one-China policy," said Foreign Undersecretary Lauro Baja.

"Cross-Strait Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 7, US)

Force Project" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 5, ROK)

10. Taiwan Domestic Politics

Two national security advisers to Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian have resigned after being impeached for negligence in a US\$5.5 million embezzlement scandal, the president's office said on March 7. Ting Yu-chou, 58, quit as secretary-general of the National Security Council, an advisory body to Chen, and was replaced by Chiou I-jen, a member of the president's Democratic Progressive Party. Ting tendered his resignation to "avoid hurting the image of the government and the security apparatus", the National Security Bureau, which he headed from 1999 to 2001. Chen also approved the resignation of Yin Tsung-wen, 69, a senior adviser to the president. Yin had served as director of the security bureau from 1993-99.

"Taiwan Domestic Politics" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 7, US)

11. Chen Shui-bian Visa Denial

Sweden has denied Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian a visa for a private visit to Sweden. Chen was invited to speak at the March 15-16 centennial celebrations of Sweden's small opposition Liberal Party. Sweden Foreign Minister Anna Lindh said that even a private visit from the Taiwanese president could not be allowed.

"Chen Shui-bian Visa Denial" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 7, US)

12. Cross-strait Relations

Taiwan welcomed overtures by PRC Premier Zhu Rongji on March 5, saying that the island hopes to resume stalled dialogue without preconditions and under the principle of equality. Taiwan foreign ministry spokesperson Chang Siao-yue expressed, "There's nothing new in the speech. Nevertheless, we hope to resume dialogue with Communist China. There should not be any preconditions. The resumption of dialogue should be under the principle of equality and fairness."

"Cross-strait Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 5, US)

Japan

1. Japan-PRC Relations

The Yomiuri Shinbun (Satoshi Saeki, "JAPAN-PRC SECURITY DIALOGUE," Beijing, 03/03/02) reported that the Japan-PRC security dialogue will be held in Tokyo on April 18. Japan and the PRC are to discuss at the meeting the issue of the salvaging of the "mystery ship" that sunk last December.

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

2. Mystery Ship Incident

The US has supplied Japan with satellite photos showing a vessel at a PRC military port that appears very similar to the mystery ship that sank in the East China Sea in December. The satellite photos show the ship docked in the naval section of Zhoushan Port which is about 100 kilometers south of Shanghai. However, one government source said that it was "100 percent certain" that the mystery ship had not visited the PRC port. Cabinet ministers declined comment on the news.

"Mystery Ship Incident" (NAPSNet Daily Report, March 5, ROK)

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Nautilus Institute

2342 Shattuck Ave. #300, Berkeley, CA 94704 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email:

nautilus@nautilus.org
