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United States

1. US on DPRK Nuclear Program

The US hopes the DPRK will promise to dismantle its nuclear weapons program later this month at critical six-nation talks aimed at easing tensions, a top US envoy said Friday. In a sign that the US and the ROK are coordinating an approach, the US Ambassador to the ROK, Thomas Hubbard, echoed the sentiment Friday in a New Year's address to Korean reporters in Seoul. "We do hope to see in these talks a DPRK commitment to dismantle its nuclear program completely, verifiably and irreversibly," Hubbard said.

The State Department's top Asia hand James Kelly will lead the US delegation to six-nation DPRK crisis talks in Beijing this month, officials said. "Assistant Secretary Kelly will lead our delegation at the six-party talks," said State Department spokesman Richard Boucher. Kelly headed the US team to the last set of six-way talks, in August, also involving the PRC, Russia, Japan, the ROK, and the DPRK which ended in stalemate.

"US Role in DPRK Multilateral Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 4, 2004)

2. Pakistan Nuclear Secrets Leak

US and British spies exposed Pakistan's Abdul Qadeer Khan after penetrating his covert nuclear smuggling ring stretching across three continents, CIA Director George Tenet said. Tenet publicly revealed how US intelligence shamed the man who gave Pakistan the bomb, and is accused of leaking nuclear secrets to Libya, the DPRK and Iran. "Our spies penetrated the network through a series of daring operations over several years," said Tenet in a speech at Georgetown University designed to defend the Central Intelligence Agency's data used to justify the Iraq war. "Through this unrelenting effort, we confirmed the network was delivering such things as illicit uranium centrifuges."

"Pakistan Nuclear Secrets Leak" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 5, 2004)

3. US Presidential Elections

Democratic presidential hopeful John Kerry will seek direct talks with the DPRK and Iran but stay tough with both countries if he wins the White House, his foreign policy chief said. Rand Beers, national security issues coordinator for the Massachusetts senator, was critical of President George W. Bush for shunning direct dialogue with the two countries. "John Kerry believes that the US should be prepared to talk directly to North Korea," he told the gathering at the Hudson Institute. Beers stressed that this did not exclude a multilateral approach to persuade the DPRK to scrap its nuclear ambitions.

"US Presidential Elections" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 5, 2004)

Korean Peninsula

1. DPRK Nuclear Freeze Proposal?

The DPRK is prepared to freeze operations of its nuclear complex in Yongbyon in return for a pledge that shipments of heavy fuel oil will resume, sources here said. The DPRK is expected to offer the concession during six-nation talks in Beijing from Feb. 25 on Pyongyang's nuclear weapons development program. The DPRK is expected to propose freezing operations of the 5,000-kilowatt experimental graphite nuclear reactor and spent fuel reprocessing facility at Yongbyon, according to sources close to the six-way talks. Those facilities would eventually also be shut down. In addition, Pyongyang will allow inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency to return to Yongbyon.

"DPRK Nuclear Freeze Proposal?" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 6, 2004)

2. Inter-Korean Ministerial Talks

The DPRK and ROK pledged on Friday after ministerial talks to work together for the success of multilateral negotiations in late February on ending the DPRK's nuclear programs. The Seoul meeting had been marked by testy exchanges that experts said showed the DPRK felt increasingly cornered in the world community. "South and North agreed to cooperate for a fruitful second round of six-party talks to resolve the nuclear issue peacefully," said a joint statement issued after three days of inter-Korean ministerial talks in Seoul. The two sides agreed to try to hold new military talks, although there was no guarantee the DPRK would follow through.

"Inter-Korean Ministerial Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 6, 2004)

3. ROK DPRK Nuclear Task Force

The ROK's Foreign Ministry said Friday it has established a task force that will deal exclusively with the DPRK nuclear issue. Cho Tae-yong, a career diplomat who is now serving as a presidential protocol officer, will head the new team, the ministry said in a press release. Cho will also serve as deputy chief of the nation's delegation to six-party talks on the nuclear issue slated for 25-27 February in Beijing, the ministry said. Deputy Foreign Minister Lee Soo-hyuck will be the chief delegate. The ministry has been pushing for the establishment of the task force as a way to take some of the burden off its North American Affairs Bureau so that the bureau can focus on other important issues, such as the country's alliance with the United States. The ministry said the task force will boost efficiency in the nation's diplomacy related to the nuclear issue.

"ROK DPRK Nuclear Task Force" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 6, 2004)

4. DPRK Working Group

Participating nations in the six-way talks to resolve the DPRK nuclear crisis are considering setting up a working group composed of deputy chiefs of their delegation to facilitate the protracted security talks. Officials expressed hope that establishing the working group will regularize the six-party talks, as the relevant nations will be able to have negotiations in between main sessions. "The participants can also engage in in-depth negotiations on details of the crucial talks and accelerate the settlement of the lingering nuclear standoff, said a Foreign Affairs-Trade Ministry official.

"DPRK Working Group" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 5, 2004)

5. Russia on DPRK Six-Way Talks

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Losyukov said Tuesday he is not expecting any breakthrough in the new round of six-nation talks to address the DPRK's nuclear ambitions, Russian media reported. "Of course, one should not expect any breakthrough," Interfax news agency quoted Losyukov as saying. "The positions are too different." Losyukov headed Russia's delegation in the first round, but he is set to become ambassador to Japan. On whether he will serve as Russia's top delegate in the upcoming round, he said simply, "If there is such an instruction, I will go."

"Russia on DPRK Six-Way Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 3, 2004)

6. Australian Role in DPRK Six-Party Talks?

Australia's Foreign Minister Alexander Downer says the DPRK has indicated it is willing to include Australia in any discussions. Downer says the object of the talks is to convince the DPRK to move towards nuclear disarmament. He says an Australian delegation has just returned from Pyongyang.

"Australian Role in DPRK Six-Party Talks?" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 3, 2004)

7. Inter-Korean Tourism Project Suspension

The DPRK threatened Wednesday to suspend a prominent inter-Korean tour project, complaining that an increasingly smaller number of tourists is joining it. The ROK Hyundai Group launched a cross-border sightseeing tour to Mount Geumgang, a scenic mountain resort in North Korea's east coast in 1998. It so far has attracted 600,000 travelers, far short of turning a profit. "We will be forced to have a different choice if the Mount Geumgang tour repeats the current sluggish conditions," said the DPRK's Asia-Pacific Peace Committee, Hyundai's DPRK business partner.

"Inter-Korean Tourism Project Suspension" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 5, 2004)

8. DPRK-Iraq Nuclear Negotiations

George Tenet, the director of the US Central Intelligence Agency, revealed on February 5 that Iraq was in secret negotiations with the DPRK to obtain some of its most dangerous missile technology. During his address at Georgetown University, Washington, Tenet told the group that "the Iraq Survey Group (ISG) has confirmed prewar intelligence that Iraq was in secret negotiations with North Korea to obtain some of its most dangerous missile technology." He added, "Intelligence also knew that Libya was working with North Korea to acquire longer-range ballistic missiles."

"DPRK-Iraq Nuclear Negotiations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 6, 2004)

9. ROK DPRK Humanitarian Aid

The ROK promised to provide about 1 million tons of rice this year to North Korea during ministerial talks that ended in Seoul yesterday, a reliable government source said. "We agreed to send about 1 million tons of rice, including direct assistance and provision through international agencies, to the North," the source said, asking not to be named. The ROK government also agreed to provide 200,000 tons of fertilizer to the DPRK for the spring seeding season.

"ROK DPRK Humanitarian Aid" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 6, 2004)

10. ROK Political Corruption

ROK prosecutors have questioned the son of the ROK's former military dictator Chun Doo-Hwan, convicted of amassing millions of dollars in illicit wealth while in office. Chun Jae-Yong, Chun's second son, was being quizzed over suspicions he helped hide money for his father who has been ordered by a court to pay it back. The son returned home Sunday from a prolonged trip abroad. The move followed years of efforts by prosecutors to trace and confiscate Chun Doo-Hwan's hidden assets.

"ROK Political Corruption" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 5, 2004)

11. ROK Military Aircraft Purchases

The ROK will buy four military radar jets for 2 trillion won (US\$1=KRW1,167.8) by 2011 to increase air surveillance over the Korean Peninsula, officials said Wednesday. The RPL has been looking into purchasing an airborne observation system since the mid-1990s. Potential bidders include France's A320-200 system, Israel's IL-76 and G-550 systems and US plane maker Boeing Co.'s (BA) AWACS B737-700, defense ministry officials said. An official said US manufacturers won't be favored in the selection process.

"ROK Military Aircraft Purchases" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 4, 2004)

People's Republic of China

1. PRC on DPRK-US Consensus

The PRC said Wednesday an unspecified 'initial consensus' has already been reached among the parties that will participate in a second round of six-nation talks on the DPRK's nuclear weapons later this month. In a group interview with Chinese media, Vice Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo anticipated 'some new consensus' on the direction for the Korean Peninsula and said a document could emerge from the talks. "It can be said every side hopes to use a joint document to put into writing the consensus reached at the talks," Dai said. "We've at this point carried out consultations and formed an initial consensus."

"PRC on DPRK-US Consensus" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 4, 2004)

2. PRC-Taiwan Relations

Taiwan's leader on Tuesday proposed a demilitarized zone, special envoys and liaison offices with the PRC - this democratic island's biggest security threat. President Chen Shui-bian made his case during his first news conference in more than three years, and he linked his latest proposals to his much-criticized call for a historical March 20 referendum that deals with the PRC relations. Chen said that the referendum - which falls on the same day he seeks re-election - would give voters a chance to decide whether they favor setting up a "peace and stability framework" that would help ease the threat of war with the PRC. Chen said that a DMZ, special envoys and liaison offices could be part of this framework.

PRC experts have shot down Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian's offer to hold talks to avoid a military confrontation, calling his overtures "a hoax aimed at wooing votes". "All of Chen's proposals are full of hackneyed and stereotyped expressions, but lack the least amount of sincerity," said Li Jiaquan, a senior researcher at the Institute of Taiwan Studies under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

"PRC-Taiwan Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 4, 2004)

3. PRC on Taiwan Spy Ring

The PRC has arrested three Taiwanese spies after breaking a massive network in what could be the worst setback for the island's intelligence operations since 1998, according to a press report. The network, centered on the PRC's Nanjing Military Region, covered targets such as the East Sea Fleet in Ningpo and Leping missile base in Jiangxi province which supervises People's Liberation Army (PLA) missile bases facing Taiwan, the United Daily News said. Taiwan's Military Intelligence Bureau colonel Li Yun-pu, head of the network, his nephew Kao Kuo-ning, colleague Wu Tse-ming and many others had been arrested on the mainland, the paper said citing reliable sources.

"PRC on Taiwan Spy Ring" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 6, 2004)

4. US on PRC WTO Commitments

The US is still not satisfied that the PRC is meeting commitments demanded by its entry into the World Trade Organisation, a senior US official said. Randall Schriver, Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs said Beijing had made some progress, but the US government had "serious concerns" about WTO compliance in some areas, including agriculture, intellectual property and transparency.

"US on PRC WTO Commitments" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 5, 2004)

5. PRC-Africa Relations

In a major policy speech on relations with Africa, visiting PRC President Hu Jintao called for a new impetus in Sino-Africa ties saying that "historic opportunities" existed. Hu, who earlier Monday signed a series of bilateral trade accords with his Gabonese counterpart Omar Bongo, proposed a three-point initiative to boost relations between the PRC and the African continent. He said it was important for the two sides to increase governmental and non-governmental interactions at all levels and to enhance trade and economic ties as well as expanding cooperation in other sectors including technology and science. Hu said the PRC was willing to provide "assistance to African countries to the best of our capacity and with no political strings attached." "Our economic cooperation in the future could focus more on infrastructure, agriculture and resources development, and we shall step up our mutually beneficial cooperation to promote common development, thus making both sides winners," he said.

"PRC-Algeria Oil Agreement" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 4, 2004)

Japan

1. Japan-US on DPRK Nuclear Diplomacy

Japan and the US reaffirmed Tuesday that the two countries as well as the ROK will cooperate in their efforts to urge the DPRK to completely dismantle its nuclear arms program, Japanese officials said. On the final day of the two-day Japan-US Strategic Dialogue, Japanese Vice Foreign Minister Yukio Takeuchi told US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage that Japan wants the DPRK to completely, irreversibly and verifiably abandon its nuclear arms program, the officials said.

"Japan-US on DPRK Nuclear Diplomacy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 3, 2004)

2. PRC-Japan Bi-lateral Talks on DPRK

The PRC and Japan hope to discuss the DPRK's nuclear program before six-way talks on the issue take place on February 25, a Japanese foreign ministry official said Thursday. The bilateral security talks would be held in Tokyo, possibly as soon as Tuesday, Japan's Kyodo news agency reported. "It would be desirable to hold the meeting before the six-way talks," the official said, declining to specify a date.

"PRC-Japan Bi-lateral Talks on DPRK" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 5, 2004)

3. Japan-DPRK Direct Links

The controversial ferry that provides the DPRK's only direct link to Japan helped the DPRK bring in at least 190 million yen (1.8 million dollars) in cash in 2003, a press report says. The sum was compiled from 69 known cash transfers of over one million yen, although further shipments in smaller amounts could have boosted the total, the Sankei Shimbun said, citing customs and police officials. The figure, just down from the 200 million yen in known cash handovers in 2002, proved the Man Gyong Bong-92 ferry remained an important channel for desperately needed hard currency, the paper said.

"Japan-DPRK Direct Links" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 6, 2004)

4. Japan Iraq Troops Departure

The first troops of a main Japanese army contingent left for Iraq Tuesday with the public deeply divided over the nation's first military dispatch to what is effectively a war zone in nearly six decades. Japan plans to send about 1,000 military personnel in all to help with Iraq's reconstruction. About 90 soldiers left Chitose on Japan's northern island of Hokkaido for southeastern Iraq, where they will build a camp on the outskirts of the city of Samawa. "Japan Iraq Troops Departure" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 3, 2004)

5. Japan DPRK Economic Sanctions Issue

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on Tuesday (3 February) ruled out the possibility of imposing economic sanctions on the DPRK in the near future. "We're not in a situation yet where we should impose economic sanctions" on the DPRK, Koizumi told reporters at his office. "Now is a sensitive time. Various arrangements are being made towards (the next round of) six-nation talks," the premier said.

"Japan DPRK Economic Sanctions Issue" (NAPSNet Daily Report, February 3, 2004)

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