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United States

1. US Visit to Yongbyon Plant

The DPRK plans to allow a US group to visit a nuclear complex to prove it is not bluffing about its progress toward making more atomic weapons, a pro-Pyongyang newspaper and source in Japan said Thursday. The January 6-10 visit by a group includes a nuclear scientist, congressional aides and a former diplomat. A diplomatic source close to the DPRK told Reuters in Tokyo the Yongbyon visit was likely because the DPRK wanted to "show how serious it is about nuclear development."

"US Visit to Yongbyon Plant" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 8, 2004, US)

"US Delegation DPRK Yongbyon Visit" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 7, 2004, ROK)

2. US-DPRK Nuclear Relations

The US will not detail security guarantees it will offer the DPRK until the DPRK proves to the outside world it has abandoned its quest for nuclear weapons, Secretary of State Colin Powell said. Powell said hopes for a new round of six-nation talks on the crisis with Pyongyang appeared to be improving, but signaled that US policy was unchanged. "We have to begin with, 'We're not going to do it and we're not going to do it in a verifiable manner,' Powell said, paraphrasing the undertaking he hoped to get from Pyongyang on its nuclear aspirations. "In return for that, we will describe the kind of security assurances we will give. And they also have to make it clear that what they're doing is permanent, because we don't want to see this movie again," he said during a press conference."

"Powell on US-DPRK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 8, 2004, US)

"Powell on DPRK Nuclear Program Suspension" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 7, 2004, ROK)

"US on DPRK Nuclear Offer" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 6, 2004, US)

3. US DPRK Delegation

An unofficial delegation of Americans flew to the DPRK on Tuesday as part of what one called a visit to increase understanding - and perhaps offset the persisting standoff between the two nations over Pyongyang's nuclear program. The visit began on the same day that the DPRK offered to refrain from testing and producing nuclear weapons as "one more bold concession" in trying to rekindle six-nation talks on the standoff. It also said it was willing to halt its nuclear activities for peaceful purposes. The American group, including a former government official and a retired academic, passed through Beijing on Tuesday morning en route to the DPRK capital for its five-day stay.

"US DPRK Delegation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 6, 2004, US)

4. Canada on US Missile Defense Plan

Canada has an October deadline to decide whether it's in or out of the US missile-defense program, Defense Minister David Pratt said Thursday. "Obviously, it has to be done before the rollout of the system in October," he said in an interview. "How long this process is going to take is anybody's guess. "It could be a matter of a few months, it could take longer."

Canada has been talking with the Americans since last May about the proposed missile shield and will soon move the discussions to a new level and take a closer look at the details of the program.

"Canada on US Missile Defense Plan" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 8, 2004, US)

5. US on Russian Non-Proliferation Efforts

Russia has been helpful in pressing Iran and the DPRK to address concerns about their nuclear programs, but the US believes it could and should do more to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction, a senior US official said. "Could they do more? The answer is yes," the official said, noting that Moscow has thus far refused to take part in a US-led scheme to seize such weapons in transit. The official, speaking to reporters on condition of anonymity at the State Department, said Russia was "playing a little hard to get" in response to US calls for it to join the so-called "Proliferation Security Initiative" (PSI).

"US on Russian Non-Proliferation Efforts" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 9, 2004, US)

6. Howard Dean on Bush DPRK Policy

Howard Dean accused President Bush of pursuing a policy that will "allow North Korea to become a nuclear power" on Tuesday, as a Democratic presidential debate turned into an all-out assault on President Bush's foreign policy. Dean, whose early opposition to the war in Iraq helped power his rise to prominence in the race, sharply faulted Bush's handling of North Korea. By refusing to engage in direct talks with the DPRK government, he said "This president is about to allow North Korea to become a nuclear power." He said the danger is not so much that the government will develop nuclear weapons, but "they will do what Pakistan is accused of, selling technology for hard currency." "That is a major national security threat," he said.

"U.S. Presidential Candidate Calls DPRK 'Serious Threat'" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 8, 2004, ROK)

"U.S. Election May Play Role In Resolving Nuclear Crisis" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 8, 2004, ROK)

"Howard Dean on Bush DPRK Policy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 6, 2004, US)

Korean Peninsula

1. DPRK Nuclear Renouncement

The DPRK said Friday that it would be foolish for the US to expect it to follow the example of "some Middle East countries," an apparent reference to Libya's decision to renounce weapons of mass destruction. The DPRK has been under international pressure to give up its nuclear weapons programs. But the DPRK is digging in with its hardline rhetoric, heralding tough negotiations. On Friday, a DPRK Foreign Ministry spokesman hinted that the recent decisions by Libya and Iran to allow intrusive inspections of their suspected weapons programs would not affect its strategy.

"DPRK Nuclear Renouncement" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 9, 2004, US)

2. DPRK on US-ROK Military Relations

A spokesman for the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland today issued a statement condemning the US for shipping latest military hardware into the ROK. This arms build-up stepped up by the US clearly proves that there is no change in its ambition to stifle the DPRK by force but it is secretly accelerating in a premeditated way the preparations for a nuclear war on the Korean Peninsula though it is paying lip-service to the "negotiated settlement of the nuclear issue", the statement says. The statement ardently calls on the compatriots from all walks of life in South Korea to turn out as one in the anti-US resistance.

"DPRK on US-ROK Military Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 8, 2004, US)

3. ROK on 2nd Round DPRK Talks

ROK, US and Japanese officials on Wednesday suggested the DPRK's offer to freeze its nuclear program may help bring about a new round of talks ending on Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions. The DPRK's offer on Tuesday to suspend its nuclear power program as well as refrain from testing or making atomic bombs was more specific than its previous statements and appeared to inject some hope for a fresh six-way talks among the US, the PRC, the ROK, the DPRK, Japan and Russia. "This should be helpful in creating the atmosphere for a second round of talks," ROK Foreign Minister Yoon Young-kwan told a news conference. "I think it may show that North Korea may also be starting to show a will to somehow seek a breakthrough in the situation. I think it is a good thing," Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi stated.

"ROK on 2nd Round DPRK Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 7, 2004, ROK)

"ROK, U.S Praise DPRK's Nuclear Proposal" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 8, 2004, ROK)

4. U.S. Has Solid Ideas On Security Assurance For DPRK

US Secretary of State Colin Powell said on Thursday that U.S. has "good, solid" ideas with respect to security assurances for DPRK. Addressing the Foreign Press Center at the State Department, Powell stressed Washington is not willing to detail those security guarantees unless Pyeongyang presents a clear statement that they are prepared to bring nuclear programs to a verifiable end. Powell's comments appeared much less upbeat than his earlier remarks in the week when he called Pyeongyang's offer to freeze testing or production of nuclear weapons a "positive and favorable" step. He also noted hopes for a new round of six-nation talks on the 14-month-old standoff with Pyeongyang appeared to be improving but signaled that the U.S. policy was unchanged on demanding a permanent end to DPRK's nuclear aspirations because it would be like "seeing the same movie over again." As diplomacy continues to resume multilateral talks involving ROK & DPRK, PRC, Japan, Russia, and the U.S., in Tokyo U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage hinted that the second round may be held in February.

"U.S. Has Solid Ideas On Security Assurance For DPRK" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 9, 2004, ROK)

5. ROK on DPRK Multilateral Talks

The ROK is saying nuclear crisis talks could be pushed back to the middle of the year as the DPRK and the US hardened their positions. "I hope the talks will be held in the first half of this year at the latest," ROK Foreign Minister Yoon Young-Kwan told journalists on his way to a cabinet meeting at the presidential office. Yoon was speaking after Washington rejected Pyeongyang's latest request for significant concessions in return for a nuclear freeze and indicated how wide a gap remained to be bridged before talks can take place. The foreign minister said scheduling problems among the six participating nations effectively ruled out a hoped-for January date. But he gave no clue as to why a new round could be delayed until June or later.

"U.S. Has Solid Ideas On Security Assurance For DPRK" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 9, 2004, ROK)

"ROK on DPRK Multilateral Talks" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 6, 2004, US)

6. Kim Jong-il Hospitalized?

Donga Ilbo ("RUMOR OF KIM JONG-IL HOSPITALIZED," Tokyo, 01/08/04) reported that on January 8 a rumor began circulating indicating that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il entered a hospital in Pyeongyang to heal his chronic enteritis back in October 2003. According to the source, in October 2003 Kim received medical treatment at Bonghwa Hospital in Pyeongyang which is known to be equipped with the best medical treatment equipment and techniques.

"Kim Jong-il Hospitalized?" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 8, 2004, US)

7. DPRK Information Technology Industry

The DPRK achieved tangible accomplishments in the information and technology industry last year, but the ROK warned that a high-level of progress will be unlikely unless the DPRK's nuclear arms issue is resolved. The ROK's Unification Ministry, which handles inter-Korean affairs, said Thursday that the DPRK has made efforts to develop the information and technology industry as a core means of getting over its economic difficulties. The DPRK had since 2000 concentrated its efforts on developing software but shifted its focus to mobile communications, hardware and the internet, beginning last year, the ministry added.

"DPRK Information Technology Industry" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 8, 2004, US)

8. Stability May Mark Inter-Korea Ties

The ROK Institute for National Unification, a government-run research arm, has drawn up its outlook for inter-Korean relations this year. In this three-part series, the JoongAng Daily provides a summary of the report. Relations between ROK & DPRK likely will enter a stable phase this year based on economic cooperation and civilian exchanges. ROK wants to continue a dialogue with DPRK in order to promote its engagement policy, dubbed the peace and prosperity policy by the Roh administration. DPRK, meanwhile, has no reason to give up the ROK's economic support, which provides up to \$400 million annually.

"Stability May Mark Inter-Korea Ties" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 9, 2004, ROK)

9. ROK Terror Alert

The ROK government has ordered a heightened security alert after a terrorist threat was mailed to its embassy in Thailand, officials said. Prime Minister Goh Kun asked his cabinet to strengthen counter-terrorism measures to protect ROK airlines, diplomatic missions and residents overseas, his office said in a press release. The order was issued after the ROK's embassy in Bangkok received a letter on Thursday warning of attacks on the country's assets and aircraft in Southeast Asia, the foreign ministry said.

"ROK Terror Alert" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 9, 2004, US)

10. ROK Election Corruption

ROK prosecutors have arrested the former campaign chief for President Roh Moo-Hyun in connection with an inquiry into illegal fundraising for the 2002 election. Arrest warrants are being sought for more lawmakers in connection with allegations that millions of illicit dollars flowed into the campaigns of Roh and his conservative opponent during the presidential election cycle. Chyung Dai-Chul, former chairman of the Millennium Democratic Party (MDP) who has since joined a breakway reformist group favoured by Roh, known as the Uri Party, has denied allegations that he received 400 million won (340,000 dollars) in illicit contributions from a construction firm.

"ROK Election Corruption" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 9, 2004, US)

11. US on ROK Piracy

The US accused the ROK on Thursday of failing to protect US-produced music and films against copyright piracy and elevated its seventh-largest trading partner to a priority watch list for intellectual property piracy. "The (Bush) administration is committed to protecting American creativity," US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick said in a statement. "The pirating of US intellectual property robs Americans and hurts those countries whose economies rely on innovation, technology, and investment." The decision to put the ROK on the priority watch list, a largely symbolic move used to convey US dissatisfaction, was based on a special review finished in late December.

"U.S. Puts ROK On Special List For Property Piracy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 9, 2004, ROK)

"US on ROK Piracy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 8, 2004, US)

People's Republic of China

1. PRC on DPRK Uranium Processing

The PRC told Asian diplomats last week it is not convinced of US claims that the DPRK has a clandestine program to enrich uranium for use in nuclear weapons, according to US officials who have been briefed on the discussions. Last week, at a meeting in Seoul between PRC, ROK and Japanese officials on the DPRK crisis, one of the most senior PRC diplomats dealing with the issue declared the PRC did not believe the DPRK had a highly enriched uranium program, according to US officials who have been informed about the meeting by the Japanese. At the meeting, the PRC official, Fu Ying, and her Japanese counterpart, Mitoji Yabunaka, were discussing a possible freeze of North Korea's nuclear programs when Yabunaka noted it would be necessary to freeze both Yongbyon and the highly enriched uranium program. Fu responded that the DPRK has denied having an enrichment program, and that the PRC also did not believe that it had one. She added that the US government briefing provided to the PRC had not been sufficient to convince the PRC that the DPRK had such a program.

"PRC on DPRK Uranium Processing" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 7, 2004, ROK)

2. PRC Constitutional Law

The PRC will strike the term "martial law" from its constitution during an upcoming legislative session, 15 years after the military crackdown on unarmed pro-democracy protesters in Tiananmen Square. According to the Oriental Outlook weekly, the constitutional amendment will strip the standing committee of the National People's Congress (NPC) of the power to declare "martial law", and instead empower it to call a "state of emergency."

"PRC Constitutional Law" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 7, 2004, ROK)

3. Cross-Straits Relations

Taiwan is planning to broaden the scope of the existing "mini three links" with the PRC to ease growing calls for full direct cross-strait exchanges by local businessmen, a report here says. The move, expected to come into effect on March 1, would allow all Taiwanese businessmen in the PRC to travel across the strait by way of the Taiwan-controlled islands of Kinmen and Matsu, the Commercial Times quoted unnamed sources as saying. The "mini three links," launched on January 2, 2001, refer to direct transport, commercial and postal links between Kinmen, Matsu and Penghu islands and the PRC's southeastern Fujian province. Current regulations only allow those investing in Fujian to travel in this way.

"Cross-Straits Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 7, 2004, ROK)

4. US-PRC-Hong Kong Relations

The US ignored a PRC warning not to meddle in its affairs and repeated a week-old statement in support of calls by people in Hong Kong for democratic reform. "Recent events ... reflect the desire of the people of Hong Kong to advance the democratization process, as provided for under the Basic Law," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said. "The US strongly supports democracy through electoral reform and universal suffrage in Hong Kong," he said in a statement.

"US-PRC-Hong Kong Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 9, 2004, US)

5. Taiwan Independence Referendum

Taiwan has announced the delay of a mission to the US to explain its controversial plan to hold a referendum, which has strained relations with the US and annoyed the PRC. "It is not good timing," said the head of the delegation Joseph Wu, who is also a deputy secretary general in the presidential office. "Based on an evaluation of the National Security Council, the delegation will not be able to gain the expected results, so we decided to delay the trip," he said. The US mission, made up of officials and academics, had been set to leave Monday for New York, Boston, Washington and San Francisco for discussions with US think-tanks and the media on the controversial referendum. The US trip would be rescheduled, Wu said without elaborating. Similar missions to Europe and Asia would follow their original schedules to depart later this month, he said.

"Taiwan Independence Referendum" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 9, 2004, US)

6. PRC SARS Development

The PRC reported a new suspected SARS case after releasing its only confirmed patient, as a team of World Health Organisation experts headed to the south to find answers. Officials in the southern province of Guangdong said a 20-year-old waitress was under quarantine at a hospital in the capital Guangzhou with symptoms of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. The woman at center of the latest case, who reportedly worked at a wildlife restaurant, developed a fever on December 26 and has been hospitalized since December 31, a local government statement said. Her condition is now stable.

"PRC SARS Development" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 8, 2004, US)

7. PRC Government-Media Relations

The PRC's cabinet plans to usher in a new era of responsiveness to the news media by designating more government spokespersons and holding more press conferences. The State Council's Information Office (SCIO) will this year set up a three-tier system which will feature spokespersons for the State Council, as well as all central government ministries and provincial governments, the China Daily said. Domestic and international media, however, still face difficulties trying to obtain government information on anything ranging from the SARS disease to the recent launch of the PRC's first manned space flight. The government however is starting to recognize the need to disseminate information in a timely manner, often to dispel rumors and control public perceptions. Zhao said the spokespersons should treat journalists "decently" -- not as "subordinates," "friends or enemies" but as "challengers in a tennis game."

"PRC Government-Media Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 6, 2004, US)

8. PRC Domestic Economy

The PRC has begun an aggressive program to recapitalize its insolvent state banks, injecting \$45bn from its vast stash of foreign exchange reserves into two large banks that are preparing to list on stock markets overseas next year. Officials said the capital injection, announced on Tuesday but completed in secret on December 31, was the first step in a strategy that envisages more than \$100bn in state funds being spent on strengthening the "big four" state banks - the weakest link in China's booming economy.

"PRC Domestic Economy" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 6, 2004, US)

Japan

1. Japan Military Cuts

The Japanese government is considering a cut of about 30 percent in the number of tanks and artillery, while boosting ground forces personnel by more than 5,000, a news report says. In the new framework of the National Defense Program Outline, the government is also considering dispensing with the guideline under which Japan possesses the minimum necessary defense capability, the Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper said, citing a government source. Japan currently has about 148,000 ground troops, and "we are trying to adjust the number so that we can effectively deal with new types of security concerns", an army spokesman said, without commenting directly on the Yomiuri report. "Japan Military Cuts" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 6, 2004, US)

2. Japan on Iraq Reconstruction

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said in his New Year address that Japan would do its utmost to help build a democratic Iraq, while pushing ahead with economic reforms in the coming year. "Japan will help the Iraqi people build a democratic government as soon as possible with their own hands. Japan will give as much help as we can to realize that goal," Koizumi told a news conference Monday. "We will provide our assistance based on the view that stability in the Middle East will lead to global peace and stability," he added. "Japan on Iraq Reconstruction" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 6, 2004, US)

3. Japan Iraq Advance Team Ground Troops

Japanese Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba Friday ordered an advance team of ground troops to be sent to Iraq, launching what could be Japan's biggest and riskiest overseas military mission since World War II. The team, which Japanese media said would include about 30 members of Japan's Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF), is expected to leave for Samawa in southern Iraq via Kuwait around January 16, although no date has been announced. Ishiba said he had also issued an order to send a main air force team including C-130 transport planes.

"Japan Iraq Advance Team Ground Troops" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 9, 2004, US)

"Japan Iraq Ground Troops Preparation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 7, 2004, ROK)

4. PRC-Japan Relations

More than 58 years after the cessation of hostilities, resentment against the Japanese runs deep in the PRC, and the government in Beijing often takes the lead in reminding the island nation of its imperialist history. It is as much about China's concern that Japan is becoming a more active player in East Asia, as it is about the 1937-45 war, which Beijing says claimed the lives of 35 million PRC. "Much of the invective that comes out of Beijing over the development of Japan's power has to do with the future rather than the past," said Robert Karniol, Asia-Pacific editor for Jane's Defence Weekly. But the constant focus on single historical issues seems to upset some professionals in the PRC's foreign service. "It's a basic characteristic of Sino-Japanese ties that they have to progress amid constant noise and interference," Yang Zhenya, former PRC ambassador to Japan said in an interview with China Youth Daily. "We should realize that some of the events that get play in the newspapers do not really reflect the broad development of ties," he said.

"PRC-Japan Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 6, 2004, US)

5. Japan Domestic Politics

The ordinary session of Japan's Diet will convene on January 19 and run until June 16. "The decision was made at a meeting of the government and the ruling coalition parties," spokeswoman at the Prime Minister's Official Residence said. Parliamentary debate is likely to focus on dispatching of Japanese troops to Iraq, the upcoming fiscal 2004 budget and a supplementary budget for the current year to March, local reports said. The cabinet of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi will officially discuss the decision and is expected to approve it, the spokeswoman said. "I do not think we can extend (the scheduled term for the session) because of the upcoming upper house election," Koizumi was quoted as telling the meeting of the government and ruling coalition officials. Given the scheduled parliament session, the election for 121 of the 247 seats in the legislative upper house is likely to be held on July 11, local media reported.

"Japan Domestic Politics" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 6, 2004, US)

6. Japan Mad Cow Test Demands

Japan wants all imported US beef to be tested for mad cow disease as the minimum condition for lifting a ban, and Japanese firms may be asked to foot some of the cost, a report said. The agriculture and health ministries will also demand disposal of dangerous parts such as the brain and spinal cord of all animals before reopening to US beef imports, the Asahi Shimbun said. Japan, the largest export market for US beef, was among the first of more than 30 countries to ban imports after the discovery of the first US case of mad cow disease, or bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), last month.

Japan Mad Cow Test Demands (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 9, 2004, US)

"Japan on US Beef Ban" (NAPSNet Daily Report, January 8, 2004, US)

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