

SANDNet Weekly Update, April 3, 2001

Recommended Citation

SANDNet, "SANDNet Weekly Update, April 3, 2001", SANDNet, April 03, 2001,
<https://nautilus.org/sandnet/sandnet-weekly-update-april-3-2001/>

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Nuclear Issues

1. India Space Launch Failure

India's attempt to enter the elite space club suffered when a launch of the Geo-synchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV-D1) by the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) was aborted. One of the rocket's engines malfunctioned, causing mechanical safety systems to shut down after only 3 seconds. India has spent 10 years and about Rs 10 billion on developing the GSLV to launch large satellites into deep space. The GSLV is a three-stage rocket similar to the US Delta rocket and the European Starsem/Ikar launch vehicle. Murli Manohar Joshi, Minister for Science and Technology, stated that another attempt will be made in May.

2. Pakistan Nuclear Program

Pakistan Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf stated that the country's nuclear program aided not only its defense, but would bring also economic prosperity.

Abdul Qadeer Khan, who founded Pakistan's nuclear weapons program after the 1974 Indian nuclear test, stepped down as chairman of the Khan Research Laboratories. Khan's retirement was announced by Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf, to Khan's surprise, though Khan will join Musharraf's cabinet as a science and technology advisor.

Acting PML party president Makhdoom Javed Hashmi stated that Pakistani political parties would not allow the military government to rollback the country's nuclear program. Hashmi cited the elevation of Abdul Qadeer Khan to minister rank as evidence of such a rollback.

3. Proliferation Issues in South Asia

Germany's Verfassungsschutz intelligence agency reported that Pakistan and India are among those countries seeking to acquire from Germany components or technology for producing weapons of mass destruction and missiles.

India

1. Security

The Indian Ministry of Defense has begun preparatory work to implement plans for a Chief of Defense Staff position and a defense procurement board, the latter of which comes on the heels of the latest procurement bribery scandal.

Former Defense Minister George Fernandes stated that the degree to which the Indian Army was compromised from within by defense procurement kickbacks without notice by the intelligence services represents a greater intelligence failure than that which led to the Kargil incident with Pakistan.

The US National Intelligence Council reported that India's ambitions to be a "global superpower" will lead to a continued nuclear standoff with Pakistan and will strain relations with the PRC, Russia, and the West. Council chairman John C. Gannon said, "Global trends conflict significantly in India" as rapid, but unequal, internal economic growth proceeds.

2. Missile Program

India's Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) successfully test fired the Prithvi medium-range missile from a mobile platform.

The Indian media is reporting on an article in the US government's Defense News which stated that India will likely procure from Russia an electro-optical seeker warhead. The advanced ballistic missile guidance technology would be a variant on the guidance systems developed by Russia for the Scud missile.

3. Ceasefire

Indian Chief Minister Radhabinod Koijam stated that the government may not extend further the unilateral ceasefire against militant groups in Kashmir because many of those groups had acted against it. Government officials indicated that the policy shift may have been caused by the recent bomb explosion near Imphal.

Indian Home Minister L.K. Advani stated that India would soon hold talks with leaders in Kashmir, but ruled out a separate dialogue with Pakistan at this time. Pakistan-based militant groups, including the Hizbul Mujahideen and the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, have rejected the possibility of talks with the Indian government without the involvement of Pakistan. Pakistani government officials also criticized the Indian government for the inconsistencies in their statements on the matter of talks over Kashmir.

4. India-Pakistan Relations

An annual foreign policy report by India's External Affairs Ministry stated that Pakistan had increased its support for cross-border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and had sought to erode the unilateral ceasefire through an escalation of violence. The report stated that Pakistan had made no effort to create an environment conducive to a dialogue between the two countries. However, the report also stated that Pakistan had responded to the ceasefire with a partial troop withdrawal from the Line of Control and invited Kashmiri leaders for talks.

Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman Riaz Mohammad Khan reported that Pakistan rejected the findings of the report by the Indian External Affairs Ministry and stated that talks were the only way to resolve any issues with India.

5. India-US Relations

US State Department spokesman Richard Boucher, commenting on the first meeting between Secretary of State Colin Powell and new Indian Ambassador to the US Lalit Mansingh, stated that US relations with India were very good but he also had nothing new to say on US policy towards India.

6. Commentary on India-US Relations

An editorial in the Times of India by K. Shankar Bajpai states that regardless of US President George Bush's reservations about the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, international nonproliferation is an Indian goal alongside with the need to strengthen its own security. Bajpai argues that while other countries may negotiate with the US over its proposed missile defense program, the PRC's inevitable missile buildup will increase India's problems.

C. Raja Mohan writes in The Hindu that India is interested in developing a deeper security dialogue

with the US. Mohan cites the example of the US coming to Kuwait's aid in the Gulf War and draws parallels to India's intention to use a US-led coalition of powers in South Asia to prevent the domination of regional waterways by the PRC. Mohan also argues that the US could play a larger role in the political stability and energy integration of South Asia and the Gulf states.

Pakistan

1. Pakistan-India Relations

Pakistan's Maritime Security Agency (MSA) arrested 38 Indian fisherman for straying into Pakistani waters in the Arabian Sea, said MSA operations director Tariq Majeed. There are now 288 Indian fisherman in Pakistani jails, compared with about 300 Pakistanis in Indian jails.

A Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman stated that while Pakistan has observed maximum restraint along the Line of Control and withdrawn troops, India has increased the level of violence against the Kashmiri people. The spokesman accused India of attacking unarmed civilians and killing people taken into custody.

2. Border Issues

A Pakistan Foreign Office press statement urged India to halt the construction of a fence along the working boundary between Kashmir and Pakistan. The statement said that the UN defines the working border as not an international border and therefore Pakistan "reserves the right to take all measures appropriate and necessary to frustrate Indian designs to change the character of the Working Boundary."

Pakistan also called upon India to stop firing along the Working Border

3. PRC Survey Assistance

Pakistan has requested the assistance of the PRC in conducting a survey of its coast. Pakistan hopes to use the results of the survey to claim an extension of its exclusive economic zone.

Kashmir

1. All Parties Hurriyat Conference

All Parties Hurriyat Conference chairman Abdul Gani Bhat stated that no changes would be made to the prospective team seeking to visit Pakistan for talks. This is despite indications from the Indian government that it would permit an APHC visit to Pakistan if Jamaat-e-Islami leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani was not included.

"Hurriyat refuses to change team to Pak"

The All Parties Hurriyat Conference also issued a statement ruling out the possibility of talks with the Indian government prior to a visit to Pakistan to meet with government officials and militant group leaders there.

Sri Lanka

1. Norwegian Role in Peace Process

The Sri Lankan government is reporting that Norway has decided to stop military sales to the country as optimism increased about the Norwegian-brokered peace effort. Some media stated that stopping military sales would work to the advantage of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

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