

Regional Overview:

Bush Discovers Asia, but Stays on Message

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U.S. President George W. Bush's February visit to Japan, South Korea, and China and Washington's decision to send over 600 U.S. troops, including Special Forces, to the southern Philippines for a unique training mission aimed at directly supporting Manila's efforts to combat terrorism provided some long-awaited administration focus on East Asia this past quarter. Bush's visit was, by all accounts, successful. He reaffirmed Washington's commitment to the U.S.-Japan alliance as the "bedrock" of peace and stability in East Asia as well as his own faith in Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro's economic reform efforts. His visit to Seoul helped to contain the damage caused in early January by his State of the Union reference to North Korea as a member of the "axis of evil," a comment that had raised anxiety levels significantly in the South (and elsewhere). His visit to Beijing reaffirmed Washington's willingness to build a "cooperative, constructive" (albeit "candid") relationship with China.

Even while continually stressing Asia's importance, Bush remained very much on message; the war on terrorism took pride of place in his prepared remarks during each leg of the trip. In other terrorism-related activity, the decision to deploy forces on a temporary basis to the Philippines was also generally well received, a few highly publicized but poorly attended protests notwithstanding. Nonetheless, concerns remain throughout the region about U.S. unilateralist or "cowboy" tendencies, which were reinforced by the leaking of the Pentagon's Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), which allegedly called for contingency planning for the use of nuclear weapons against North Korea, China, Russia, and others.

Bush's Trip: Reaffirmation, but No East Asia Vision

As one senior administration spokesman noted in early February, President Bush's Feb. 17-22, 2002 trip to East Asia provided an important opportunity "to articulate and demonstrate that our strategic interests in the region are remarkably deep, diverse, and enduring." The president did, in fact, reaffirm Washington's commitment to East Asia security, in part just by showing up. Indeed, his decision to travel to Asia came as a pleasant surprise to most Asia-watchers, given Washington's preoccupation with the war on terrorism.

But, while continually stressing Asia's importance, the war on terrorism continued to dominate his speeches and discussions during each leg of the trip. He did not (as many of us had hoped) use the occasion of his first major swing through East Asia to lay out a broader vision, similar to

his predecessor's July 1993 "New Pacific Community" speech. But he left no question as to the centrality of America's bilateral alliances to regional peace and stability and Washington's commitment to maintain a strong deterrence posture on the Korean Peninsula. President Bush also used common concerns about terrorism as part of the rationale for his constructive engagement with Beijing.

U.S.-Japan Relations: Never Better?

The good news, underscored by the visit, is that the U.S.-Japan security relationship – "one of the great and enduring alliances of modern times" – is currently on solid ground and is likely to remain so. Bush was no doubt delighted (if not surprised) when Koizumi, in response to a "what if" question about Iraq, stated unequivocally that Japan would continue to support the U.S. In his prepared remarks at a joint press conference, Koizumi even talked about the "need to carry forward this fight against terrorism." It remains to be seen, of course, if Prime Minister Koizumi can deliver on his pledge but for now the atmospherics could not be better.

And then there are the neighbors. While a desire to be on the right side of the war on terrorism may have also helped to temper Chinese and Korean (North and South) criticism of Japanese naval deployments in support of Afghanistan operations, their long-standing concerns about Japanese remilitarization have, if anything, been reinforced. The war on terrorism may have further strengthened the already close bonds between the Bush and Koizumi administrations, but it has not brought Japan any closer together with its neighbors.

Koizumi's expressions of understanding and support aside, many in Japan continue to privately express concern about Bush's hard-line policies toward North Korea and China and other U.S. unilateralist tendencies. As one official noted privately, Bush's "too cold" and Clinton's "too warm" Korea policies are equally disturbing; the Perry Process, on the other hand, had it "just about right." The same holds true for China. Neither "strategic partner" nor "strategic competitor" is particularly comforting. "Cooperative, constructive" sounds much better, if only it can be maintained.

The most contentious and critical issue between Tokyo and Washington – Japan's inability to make the fundamental reforms necessary to revive its increasingly sick economy – remains essentially unchanged despite the February visit. While Bush signaled early on that he would not resort to the twin failed tactics of the Clinton administration – Japan bashing and Japan passing – thus far his administration has been equally unsuccessful in convincing Japan to finally get its economic house in order. During his Tokyo visit, Bush was not only effusive in his praise for Japan's support for the war on terrorism, he was equally lavish in his praise for Prime Minister Koizumi personally, not only as a courageous leader and true friend, but also as a "great reformer" – a comment that reportedly drew open smirks even from members of Koizumi's own party. Balancing this public praise, however, was Bush's private letter to Koizumi, conveniently leaked to the press, expressing his "strong concern" about the lack of progress in fixing the economy, thus permitting Bush to play both "good cop" and "bad cop" on this issue, equally to no avail.

Korea and the "Axis of Evil"

If, as the popular saying goes, “everything has changed” since Sept. 11, it is also true that, as far as the Korean Peninsula is concerned, the more things change, the more they remain the same. Even Washington’s most directly Korea-related 9-11 fallout – President Bush’s “axis of evil” formulation – for all its drama, changed little; it merely reinforced the administration’s already unyielding views toward the DPRK and Pyongyang’s paranoia regarding Washington’s intentions. (The term also pales in comparison with the phrases Pyongyang has previously employed in describing the Bush administration.)

The major strains in U.S.-ROK relations also predated 9-11; they harken back to ROK President Kim Dae-jung’s poorly handled March 2001 visit to Washington. The “axis” comment underscored the problem, it didn’t create it. I argued last quarter that it would take a Bush visit to Seoul to undo this damage. To his credit, President Bush did a good job in toning down his comments regarding North Korea and, more important, in reaffirming his support for President Kim when the two met in Seoul. But Bush’s more positive approach quickly became a page two story, with any goodwill created in Seoul seemingly wiped out by Olympic speed-skating judges in Salt Lake City. Much work remains to be done here.

While I have been a member of the chorus criticizing the “axis of evil” comment – more so for its impact on U.S.-ROK relations than for its impact on Pyongyang – the attacks against the use of this slogan are now creating as much confusion and misunderstanding as the original phrase. When learned former ambassadors like Morton Abramowitz and James Laney claim (as they did in a *Washington Post* editorial) that President Bush “implicitly threatened to destroy North Korea or force it to modify its behavior [and] implied the time was sooner rather than later,” it may be time to stop and re-listen to what the president actually said.

What I heard President Bush say was this: If states (like North Korea, Iran, and especially Iraq) that are pursuing weapons of mass destruction (WMD) place those weapons in the hands of terrorists who would be willing to employ them against the United States, they will be held accountable. He was, in the president’s own words, “putting them on notice.” Given the hard evidence that al-Qaeda was seeking such weapons and the assumption that the terrorists would use them if acquired (which requires no great leap of faith, given al-Qaeda’s past track record), the message itself appears appropriate, perhaps even necessary. I continue to believe that there were more effective ways to get this word across (and that the destruction of the Taliban had already delivered this message more effectively). But the message itself was pretty straightforward.

Bush was not signaling that North Korea was the next Afghanistan, neither did he indicate he was itching for an opportunity to attack, either sooner or later. Since North Korea claims to be firmly against international terrorism (and I am willing to give Pyongyang the benefit of the doubt on this one), Bush is not even asking the North to modify its behavior, but merely to live up to its word.

To his credit, President Bush has gone to great lengths to explain that branding North Korea as “evil” does not rule out dialogue, reminding us that former President Ronald Reagan – clearly Bush’s role model – made significant progress in arms control and other negotiations with the

Soviet Union while still branding it an “evil empire.” Bush even proclaimed, while in Seoul, that neither South Korea nor the United States had any intention to attack the North. This constitutes one of the most direct security assurances ever offered to Pyongyang by a U.S. president.

So, where do we go from here? As far as the Bush team is concerned, the ball is in Pyongyang’s court. President Bush repeated Washington’s willingness to begin a dialogue with North Korea “any time, any place, without preconditions” throughout his Asia trip and even publicly asked Chinese President Jiang Zemin to help deliver this message to North Korean leader Kim Jong-il. As a result, the next step is up to Pyongyang. If it remains too suspicious of Bush to engage directly – all U.S. overtures to date (both before and after the “axis” comment) have been swiftly rejected – it can always agree to a resumption of the Four-Party Talks (involving the two Koreas, the U.S., and China). Or it can re-engage in serious dialogue with the South. President Bush, during his Seoul stopover, tried to breathe new life into ROK President Kim Dae-jung’s Sunshine Policy of engagement with the North, while making it clear that the road to Washington continues to run through Seoul.

As the quarter ended, there were encouraging signs that the North was in fact prepared, for the first time since October 2001, to resume high-level dialogue with Seoul. While one welcomes such news, a bit of caution is always in order, given Pyongyang’s previous tendency to renege on agreements. The fact that Pyongyang has announced that it expects 200,000 or more tourists to come visit this spring’s Arirang Festival in North Korea (which also commemorates the 90th anniversary of its founder Kim Il-sung’s birth) raises the possibility that narrow economic motives (and pride – imagine the embarrassment if few show up) may be the main reason for the latest overtures, rather than a genuine desire to promote peace and reconciliation. Only time will tell!

U.S.-China Relations: Weathering Potential Storms

On a somewhat more positive note, President Bush’s China trip went well and Sino-U.S. relations weathered several potentially disruptive storms during the past quarter. The president’s decision to include Beijing in his travel plans sent a strong signal to China about Washington’s willingness to engage China, even as the Pentagon was sending countervailing signals. He could have easily justified not going, having just visited Shanghai in October (for the APEC Leaders’ Meeting). Some would argue that he could also have just as easily added China to his “axis” list as to his trip itinerary. The fact that he did not is another indication that the influence of the so-called “blue team” remains in check.

During his visit, Presidents Bush and Jiang both reaffirmed their willingness to pursue a “cooperative, constructive” relationship and China, at Bush’s encouragement, demonstrated its willingness to play “honest broker” with North Korea. Both sides also pledged further cooperation in the war on terrorism while underscoring a greater coincidence of views regarding nuclear South Asia. Most important to Jiang, the Chinese leader received a much-desired invitation to visit Bush’s Crawford, Texas ranch, another important piece of symbolism.

But, as pleasant as Bush’s trip was, it also underscored a continued reluctance to engage in true strategic dialogue or to otherwise cooperate on nonproliferation or missile-related issues – each

insists the other must take the first step on nonproliferation and China continues to see missile defense as universally bad but offensive missiles as an internal decision not subject to debate. There was also a clear Chinese reluctance to discuss cooperation on fighting terrorism beyond the Afghanistan campaign.

In addition, Bush pulled few punches in expressing his continued commitment to Taiwan's security, which remains the primary stumbling block to greater strategic cooperation. And, in President Bush's much-heralded address to the Chinese people, he underscored just how far apart both nations remain on issues relating to human rights and religious freedom.

In short, no strategic breakthrough was achieved. It appears, at least from the Chinese side (and perhaps from the U.S. side as well) that one was not even sought. However, the positive tone established by Bush's second visit to China and Jiang's desire to put his name in the Crawford guest book next to Russian President Vladimir Putin's and British Prime Minister Tony Blair's no doubt contributed to the firm but still (thus far) milder than expected response to the subsequent visit of Taiwan's Defense Minister Tang Yiau-ming to Florida for what conference organizers (incorrectly, if not disingenuously) called a "defense summit." Even though visits by senior Taiwan officials, including serving military chiefs is not unprecedented, and Tang's subsequent meetings with senior administration officials were private, not official, the Tang visit drew strong and repeated protests from China . . . as did the leaked story about the Pentagon's Nuclear Posture Review, which reportedly included China among the nations allegedly being targeted. But PRC spokesmen made it clear that these actions would not undermine the broader relationship or interfere either with Jiang's trip or with the planned trip of his apparent successor, Vice President Hu Jintao, to Washington this spring.

Nuclear Posture Review – the Cowboy Returns

China was not the only one upset by the NPR. To the extent that Bush's February "no attack" pledge provided reassurance to North Korea (and to increasingly nervous allies in the South and elsewhere), this was quickly negated by leaked reports that the Pentagon had been instructed to develop contingency plans calling for the use of nuclear weapons to deter or respond to a chemical or biological attack on the United States by rogue states such as North Korea. Once again, complaints about U.S. unilateralism were heard, especially as rumors spread that the U.S. wanted to resume testing of nuclear weapons and might even contemplate the preemptive (first) use of such weapons.

One suspects (or at least hopes) that such planning is not new, at least when it comes to responding to the use of weapons of mass destruction against the U.S., its forces, or its allies. After all, 10 years ago, the United States and its allies issued a firm warning to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein that the use of chemical or biological weapons against DESERT STORM forces would result in retaliation "by all available means" (read: nuclear weapons). If the Pentagon is just now getting around to developing contingency plans for such an option against Iraq or others who are known or suspected to possess chemical or biological (or nuclear) weapons, the real question should not be "Why?" but "What took them so long?"

The NPR apparently documents what had already been presumed; namely, that the U.S. retained the prerogative to respond with nuclear weapons to non-nuclear attacks employing other weapons of mass destruction against the U.S., its forces, and its allies. The document reportedly also explains some of the scenarios the defense planners had in mind, including “an Iraqi attack on Israel or its neighbors, a North Korean attack on South Korea, or a military confrontation over the status of Taiwan.” Similarly, the NPR allegedly notes that “a sudden regime change by which an existing nuclear arsenal comes into the hands of a new hostile leadership” should be considered an “unexpected contingency,” effectively adding Russia to the mix. Political sensitivities aside, this sounds like prudent military planning.

Keep in mind that contingency plans do not lock a country into a particular course of action; they merely entail the development of a range of possible responses to an anticipated crisis. Developing a plan does not mean that nuclear weapons automatically, or even inevitably, will be used. The primary reason for factoring them in is to remind potential adversaries – as the 1991 announcement effectively reminded Hussein – that use of WMD could trigger an equally horrific response. This is called deterrence. Nonetheless, the “Bush as Cowboy” image continues to be perpetuated by such actions, not only in the minds of potential adversaries (which might not be all bad) but by friends and allies as well. One potential remedy in this instance would be serious consideration by the Bush administration of a “no first use of weapons of mass destruction” policy, which would eliminate fears of preemption while still putting potential adversaries on notice. [For more on this topic, see *PacNet Newsletter* 12.]

The Philippines: Not Another Afghanistan . . . or Vietnam

A few final words about the deployment of 660 U.S. military troops, including Special Forces trained in counterterrorism operations, to the southern Philippines – an action which has caused many critics to proclaim the Philippines to be “the next Afghanistan” . . . except, of course, for those who are busy proclaiming it “the next Vietnam.” These naysayers are being joined in the Philippines by “the Americans are coming” crowd who are frantically proclaiming that U.S. assistance to Philippine military forces fighting insurgents in the south constitutes an attack, not on terrorism, but on Philippine sovereignty.

Such concerns seem ill-conceived. First of all, the Philippines is not the next Afghanistan. Actually, Afghanistan is the next Afghanistan. While the Taliban is no longer in power, the search for key leaders continues as does the most important task: destroying al-Qaeda’s leadership and terrorist network. President Bush also keeps reminding us that the war on terrorism is not like other wars, and will be waged on many fronts, using diplomatic, political, economic, and financial as well as military means. Too much focus on the next military battle helps lose sight of the broader war.

Meanwhile, if those who see shades of Vietnam cannot tell the difference between the democratically elected government in Manila and the often-corrupt generals of old Saigon, they should at least be able to see the difference between the Viet Cong (and its backers in Hanoi) and the Abu Sayyaf. The Abu Sayyaf is an organization of, at best, a few hundred guerrillas that has chosen, with apparent al-Qaeda backing and training, to employ terrorist tactics to intimidate others while enriching itself. It has conducted cross-border kidnapping raids in Malaysia (a

Muslim nation); it murders innocent civilians (beheadings being a favorite means). Two American missionaries are among its current hostages. Earlier efforts by nations like Libya to “help” Manila by paying ransom to the Abu Sayyaf to release kidnap victims have allowed the rebel group to arm and equip itself, frequently with better weapons than those available to the Philippine military forces who for several years have been valiantly fighting these terrorists.

The United States is a security ally of the Philippines – the termination of the old basing agreement brought an end to the stationing of U.S. troops in the Philippines 10 years ago; it did not abrogate the Mutual Defense Treaty. As a result, the U.S. has both a legal and moral obligation to help the Philippines defend itself. America has also declared war against terrorism. For Washington not to offer to assist Manila in its own struggle against a terrorist organization (especially one with al-Qaeda backing) would be inexcusable. Strict constitutional provisions and a new Visiting Forces Agreement provide the guidelines and ground rules under which U.S. forces can deploy to the Philippines, for temporary periods of time, for joint training with their military ally. These must be, and are being, strictly honored. But, given the circumstances, providing a small contingent of Special Forces and other U.S. support troops to serve as advisors seems to make great sense. This is not Afghanistan (or Vietnam) revisited. This is the U.S. doing what it is supposed to do – helping an ally fight for a common cause.

Note also that the deployment of U.S. military advisors is part of a much broader package of military and economic assistance aimed at underwriting the government of Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. This expansive aid package will help Manila address the root causes of terrorism, even as it assists the Philippine military fight against those who would exploit impoverished or disenfranchised members of society for their own political purposes.

Regional Chronology January-March 2002

Jan. 1, 2002: Taiwan joins the WTO.

Jan. 7, 2002: Foreign ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) meet in Beijing for a “non-regular” meeting to coordinate a regional counterterrorism agency and a mechanism for emergency response.

Jan. 8, 2002: U.S. Congressional delegation meets with PRC President Jiang Zemin.

Jan. 9-16, 2002: Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro visits Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines, proposes a “Comprehensive Economic Partnership.”

Jan. 10, 2002: Jack Pritchard, U.S. special envoy to the inter-Korean peace talks, meets with Pak Gil-yon, DPRK ambassador to the UN.

Jan. 11-18, 2002: U.S. Pacific Command Third Multinational Planning Augmentation Team (MPAT) meeting is held in Seoul; 150 military officials from 30 nations attend, including Japan, the PRC, and Russia.

Jan. 13-18, 2002: PRC Premier Zhu Rongji visits India.

Jan. 15, 2002: First contingent of about 100 U.S. forces, including Special Forces, deploy to southern Philippines to train Philippine forces fighting against the Abu Sayyaf.

Jan. 15-16, 2002: U.S. and Russian defense officials meet to discuss nuclear arm cuts in Washington.

Jan. 15-19, 2002: IAEA inspection team visits nuclear facilities in Yongbyon, North Korea.

Jan. 16, 2002: U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell visits Pakistan.

Jan. 17, 2002: ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) ministerial meeting in Beijing.

Jan. 17, 2002: Secretary Powell in India.

Jan. 17, 2002: UN announces East Timor's first presidential election date, April 14.

Jan. 17-18, 2002: Thai PM Thaksin Shinawatra meets with Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri in Indonesia.

Jan. 18-22, 2002: Secretary Powell visits Japan to attend the Afghanistan reconstruction meetings, meets with PM Koizumi and FM Tanaka Makiko.

Jan. 20-22, 2002: Deputy U.S. Trade Representative Jon M. Huntsman, Jr. visits Seoul.

Jan. 20-23, 2002: ROK Foreign Minister Han Seung-soo meets with FM Tanaka in Tokyo.

Jan. 21, 2002: Lee Hoi-chang, leader of the Grand National Party and leading ROK presidential candidate, visits U.S. and meets with President Bush.

Jan. 21, 2002: The Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation is installed in East Timor to address reconciliation and justice issues.

Jan. 21, 2002: Taiwan Premier Chang Chun-hsiung resigns.

Jan. 21-22, 2002: Afghanistan reconstruction international meeting in Tokyo.

Jan. 23-26, 2002: U.S. and DPRK fail to reach an agreement at the talks on U.S. MIA held in Thailand.

Jan. 23-26, 2002: Russian Navy Chief Adm. Indroko Sastrowiryo visits Japan.

Jan. 24, 2002: Seoul and Tokyo agree on extradition treaty.

Jan. 25, 2002: Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG) meeting in Seoul.

Jan. 27-Feb. 4, 2002: ROK FM Han meets with Secretary Powell and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice in Washington, D.C.

Jan. 28-Feb. 5, 2002: Philippine President Macapagal-Arroyo in the UK, Canada, and the U.S.

Jan. 28-Feb. 5, 2002: USCINCPAC Adm. Blair in Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, Japan, and South Korea, invites Vietnamese officials to observe “Cobra Gold,” the biggest wargame in Southeast Asia, in May.

Jan. 28-Feb. 8, 2002: Australian PM Howard visits the U.S., Singapore, and Indonesia.

Jan. 29, 2002: Japanese FM Tanaka resigns.

Jan. 29, 2002: President Bush names North Korea, Iran, and Iraq as “axis of evil” in his State of the Union address.

Jan. 30, 2002: New ROK Minister of Unification Jeong Se-hyun takes office.

Jan. 30, 2002: Cambodia successfully holds the first elections for local level officials.

Jan. 30, 2002: Indonesian and Singaporean agree to include Indonesia’s Batam and Bintan Islands in the U.S.-Singapore free trade area.

Jan. 30, 2002: Russian PM Mikhail Kasyanov in Washington, D.C. and New York.

Jan. 31, 2002: UN Security Council votes to extend UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) until May.

Jan. 31, 2002: U.S. and the Philippines begin six-month joint anti-terrorism exercise “Balikatan 2002.”

Feb. 1, 2002: Yu Shyi-kun is sworn in as Taiwanese premier.

Feb. 1, 2002: Kawaguchi Yoriko is sworn in as Japanese foreign minister.

Feb. 1-2, 2002: Russian Foreign Minister Ivanov meets with PM Koizumi and FM Kawaguchi in Japan.

Feb. 2, 2002: Citizens of Japan and the ROK launch nongovernmental organization “History Education Asia Network” in Tokyo.

Feb. 4, 2002: ROK President Kim replaces FM Han Seung-soo with Choi Sung-hong.

Feb. 4, 2002: ROK and Japanese high-level officials hold security talks in Tokyo.

Feb. 6, 2002: CIA Director George Tenet says that the DPRK continues to export missiles.

Feb. 7, 2002: DPRK Ambassador to UN Pak Gil-yon indicates DPRK is ready to resume talks with U.S.

Feb. 8, 2002: North Korea officials call off U.S. delegations' visit scheduled on Feb. 19-22.

Feb. 8-9, 2002: G-7 meeting in Ottawa.

Feb. 9, 2002: East Timor adopts a Constitution draft, to be finalized in early March and effective in May.

Feb. 9, 2002: FM Kawaguchi speaks via phone with FM Tang and ROK FM Choi Sung-hong.

Feb. 10, 2002: DPRK releases Japanese journalist Sugishima Takashi after two years of detention.

Feb. 13, 2002: President Bush meets Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf in Washington, D.C.

Feb. 17-18, 2002: U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Richard Myers and Indian DM George Fernandes hold talks on arms sales in India.

Feb. 17-19, 2002: President Bush visits Japan.

Feb. 19, 2002: U.S. Under Secretary of State John Bolton and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Georgii Mamedov hold arms control talks in Moscow.

Feb. 19-21, 2002: President Bush in the ROK.

Feb. 21, 2002: A U.S. Army helicopter goes down off the island of Mindanao, killing all 12 U.S. military personnel on board.

Feb. 21, 2002: Under Secretary Bolton indicates that U.S. might use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states, saying "we would do whatever is necessary to defend America's innocent civilian population."

Feb. 21, 2002: Thai Deputy PM Nguyen Tan Dung meets with Vietnamese counterpart in Ha Noi; the two agree on the establishment of communication channels and joint sea patrols.

Feb. 21-22, 2002: President Bush in the PRC.

Feb. 23, 2002: Secretary Powell says Beijing's export of missile technology remains an obstacle to the bilateral relationship.

Feb. 25, 2002: Indonesia and East Timor hold the first ministerial level meeting in Nusa Dua, Bali.

Feb. 26, 2002: Indonesia, East Timor, Australia trilateral ministerial meeting in Nusa Dua, Bali.

Feb. 27-28, 2002: Regional Ministerial Conference on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crimes is held in Indonesia.

Feb. 27-March 1, 2002: PRC President Jiang in Vietnam, frameworks agreement on the provision of preferential loans by China to Vietnam and an agreement on economic and technical cooperation signed.

Feb. 27-March 3, 2002: DPRK Supreme People's Assembly Executive Committee Chairman Kim Yong-nam visits Thailand to improve investment cooperation and signs bilateral agreements on business, culture, and media exchanges.

Feb. 28, 2002: Russian President Vladimir Putin expresses support for the U.S.-led antiterrorism war in Georgia.

Feb. 28, 2002: PRC-Russia Friendship Treaty ratified in Russia.

March 3-5, 2002: Kim Yong-nam in Malaysia.

March 5, 2002: Philippines Foreign Minister Teofisto Guingona announces Philippine plans to buy 24 F-5 fighter jets from Taiwan.

March 6, 2002: PRC Finance Minister Xiang Huaicheng proposes 17.6 percent increase in defense spending.

March 10-12, 2002: U.S.-Taiwan nongovernmental business meeting in Florida. U.S. Deputy Sec. of Defense Wolfowitz and Asst. Sec. of State James Kelly meet informally with Taiwan's Defense Minister Tang Yiau-ming and Chief of the General Staff Li Chieh.

March 12, 2002: DPRK Deputy FM Kim Young-il visits Beijing, meets with PRC Vice Premier Qian Qichen.

March 12, 2002: Russian DM Igor Ivanov in Washington, D.C., meets with President Bush and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

March 14, 2002: PM Koizumi and President Musharraf hold their first summit in Tokyo.

March 15, 2002: Jack Pritchard, U.S. special envoy to the inter-Korean peace talks, meets with Pak Gil-yon, DPRK ambassador to the UN in New York.

March 16, 2002: PRC Vice FM Li Zhaoxing summons U.S. Ambassador to PRC Clark Randt and delivers "solemn representations" on Taiwan delegation's visit to the U.S.

March 18, 2002: PRC declines the request for the USS Curtis Wilbur, a U.S. Navy destroyer, to make a routine port call in Hong Kong April 5-9.

March 18, 2002: Twenty-five DPRK defectors arrive in Seoul after seeking asylum in Beijing.

March 18, 2002: PRC Vice FM Wang Yi and Japanese Deputy FM Takano Toshiyuki hold the first vice-ministerial security meeting in Tokyo.

March 19, 2002: Chinese Ambassador to Seoul Li Bin warns that NGO activities to help North Korean defectors undermine bilateral relationship between Seoul and Beijing.

March 20, 2002: Taiwan Economic Minister Christine Tsung resigns.

March 21-22, 2002: Under Secretary Bolton and Russian Deputy FM Mamedov hold nuclear arms control talks in Geneva.

March 21-23, 2002: PM Koizumi visits Seoul, discusses a possible joint working group to develop an FTA.

March 21-27, 2002: The U.S. and the ROK conduct the biggest joint military exercise, Foal Eagle, since the end of Korean War.

March 24-28, 2002: President Megawati meets President Jiang in Beijing, President Jiang offers \$400 million loans.

March 25, 2002: Seoul announces that DPRK will resume dialogue with the ROK in April.

March 26-27, 2002: Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov visits Vietnam, announces Russia's early withdrawal from the naval base of Cam Ranh Bay by July 2002.

March 28, 2002: The U.S. and ROK sign memorandum of understanding on land swapping. Under the Land Partnership Plan, the U.S. will close 31 U.S. military facilities over next 10 years.

March 28, 2002: India and PRC open their first direct air route.

March 28, 2002: The PRC and Japan sign yuan-yen swap agreement.

March 28-29, 2002: ROK FM Choi meets PRC FM Tang in Beijing.

March 28-30, 2002: President Megawati meets with DPRK leader Kim Jong-il; urges DPRK to resume inter Korean dialogue.

March 28-April 2, 2002: Indian FM Jaswant Singh visits China.

March 29, 2002: Jack Pritchard, U.S. special envoy to the inter-Korean peace talks, meets with Pak Gil-yon, DPRK ambassador to the UN in New York.

March 31-April 1, 2002: President Msegawati visits the ROK.