

Regional Overview

Diplomacy Fails with Iraq; Is North Korea Next?

By Ralph A. Cossa, President of Pacific Forum CSIS

Why diplomacy failed in Iraq is subject to intense debate; that it failed is indisputable. What does this mean for U.S. policy in Asia and for multilateral cooperation regionally and globally? Of more immediate concern, will the UN, having failed once (at least in the Bush administration's eyes), now step up and deal with the growing nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula, or will it prove itself irrelevant? For those focused on Asia, the big question now is, "Is North Korea Next?" Does the perceived U.S. "impatience" with the UN process vis-a-vis Iraq point to more unilateralism in the future and a greater tendency or preference to employ the military option against Pyongyang? I think not! But the perception is growing and how Washington deals with it will impact U.S. credibility and acceptability in Asia and elsewhere long after Saddam is relegated to the dust bin of history. Iraq and North Korea are not Asia's only concerns. An outbreak of deadly Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), a viral pneumonia, first detected in south China and now spreading globally, has magnified the anticipated economic consequences of the war in Iraq on Asian economies and, especially, airlines.

Containing Saddam . . . or Bush?

"The United Nations Security Council has not lived up to its responsibilities, so we will rise to ours." With these words, and the accompanying 48-hour ultimatum to Saddam Hussein for he and his sons to leave Iraq, the diplomatic phase of the campaign to disarm Iraq came to an abrupt halt on March 17. Shortly thereafter, the U.S.-led military campaign began in earnest.

Why diplomacy failed remains a subject of intense debate. Few could argue seriously that Iraq had fully complied with Security Council Resolution 1441, which found Iraq in material breach of numerous earlier UNSC resolutions and promised "serious consequences" if Iraq did not fully and immediately disarm. Would giving the UN inspectors more time, as France, Russia, China, and others argued, have made a difference? Or, was nothing short of a credible threat of military force and a perceived willingness to back up this threat necessary to compel Saddam to disarm without actual combat, as Washington, the UK, and Spain asserted when they pushed, in vain, for a final UNSC ultimatum? We'll never know. Bush's declaration left the questions for academics and historians to ponder, although many would argue that the debate had already become moot once France made it clear that it would veto any follow-on amendment that implicitly authorized (or even more directly threatened) the use of force against Iraq.

As several pundits pointed out, French President Jacques Chirac seemed more concerned about containing George Bush (or U.S. global leadership in general) than Saddam's weapons of mass destruction. If nothing else, Chirac's unyielding stance provided ample fodder for late-night comedians, who otherwise were straining to find some humor in Washington's march toward war. The most cutting comment came from America's leading daytime comedian, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who observed that "Going to war without France is like going duck hunting without your accordion." Such comments went down well with American audiences and the media, but, like his earlier characterization of France and Germany as "old Europe," did little to help the fine art of diplomacy.

It could have been worse! In a rare March 6 press conference, President Bush had pledged to seek another UN resolution prior to initiating combat, even while asserting that such authorization was not needed for America to either protect itself or enforce earlier resolutions. It was, according to President Bush, "time for people to show their cards, to let the world know where they stand when it comes to Saddam." Fortunately, for Washington and for the UNSC, the "18th resolution" did not come up for a vote. Had such a vote been called and failed – either due to a failure to obtain at least nine votes or, as promised, by a French veto regardless of how much other support it engendered – the U.S. and UK "coalition of the willing" would undoubtedly have still proceeded with its plan to invade Iraq, rendering Washington and London, among others, in clear defiance of the UNSC and further demonstrating the United Nation's impotence in dealing with contentious security issues.

Given NATO's decision in 1999 to bypass the UNSC completely in prosecuting its war against Slobodan Milosevic – an action that France supported – and the current squabble over the UNSC's role in a post-Saddam Iraq, serious questions are now being raised about the UNSC's future viability. Recall that in President Bush's Sept. 12, 2002 speech before the UN, when he challenged that body to enforce its own resolutions, he noted that, "All the world now faces a test and the United Nations a difficult and defining moment."

Recall also the commentary contained in the October 2002, *Comparative Connections* Regional Overview: "Regime Change/Preemption vs. Disarmament/Multilateralism: The U.S. Foreign Policy Debate Continues." "The big question before the international community today is not 'will (or when will) the U.S. attack?' but will the UN Security Council finally act forcefully to restore its own credibility . . . and with it the credibility of those in Washington and elsewhere who have long argued that Washington must remain on a cooperative, multilateral, internationalist path? Or will the members of the UNSC prove the unilateralists right?" The most common refrain among Washington hardliners who have long believed that the UN, along with Saddam, belong in history's dustbin, is now "I told you so!" While reports of the UN's imminent death, to paraphrase Mark Twain, may be largely exaggerated, some measure of reform and revitalization seems necessary if it is to regain any relevance, at least when it comes to dealing with pressing security issues.

Others Show Their Cards

While President Bush chose not to reveal his losing hand at the UN, others in East Asia were less reluctant to show their cards. Foremost among these on the positive side were two of Washington's allies, Australia and Japan, whose leaders braved widespread public opposition to the war by steadfastly standing behind Washington. Australian Prime Minister John Howard sent Australian military special operations (SAS) forces to fight on the ground in Iraq, while also committing a small number of fighter aircraft, air-to-air refuelers, and ships to Operation Iraqi Freedom, despite receiving a vote of censure by Australia's upper house of Parliament for his outspoken support to the war effort. Howard argued that his decision to support Washington was "right," "legal," and "directed toward the protection of the Australian national interest."

Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro was also an outspoken supporter of Washington's efforts to obtain a stronger UNSC resolution, making numerous phone calls to lobby Security Council members. More importantly, when the UNSC fig leaf was removed, Koizumi remained firmly behind President Bush and appeared delighted when Japan was named among the "coalition of the willing" even though no Japanese troops were committed to the war. Koizumi's willingness to expand logistical support to Operation Enduring Freedom naval forces in the Indian Ocean did, however, free up U.S. forces for the Iraqi campaign. This, plus Tokyo's stated willingness to participate in the post-Saddam rebuilding effort, were greatly appreciated by Washington.

Underlying Koizumi's strong support as a good ally was a nervousness, expressed by Japanese security specialists and pundits, that such support was justified primarily to assure Washington's continued support to Tokyo in the face of dangers closer to home: read, North Korea. One prominent Japanese security specialist, at an off-the-record Pacific Forum conference, indicated growing Japanese discomfort with Washington's "coalition of the willing" approach which, when combined with its tendency to "openly humiliate" traditional allies – Rumsfeld's accordion and old Europe remarks were given as examples – makes other allies nervous.

Speaking of nervous allies, South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun also demonstrated some political courage by promising to send some 700 noncombat troops, including a construction battalion and medical assistance personnel, to support Operation Iraqi Freedom, despite considerable opposition from within his own party as well as heavy public criticism – the opposition Grand National Party, which holds a majority in the legislature, supported the move. This action was seen as a positive gesture by Roh, who had been initially viewed with suspicion by many in Washington due to his youthful (and since recanted) opposition to the presence of U.S. military forces on the Korean Peninsula. Concerns about unilateral U.S. actions regarding North Korea no doubt provide added incentive for Roh to shore up the alliance partnership.

Washington's other two East Asian treaty allies, the Philippines and Thailand, were a bit more tentative in their support. Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo expressed Manila's "political and moral" support to the effort to eliminate Iraq's weapons of mass

destruction and was considering the deployment of peacekeeping troops at some point in the future. Meanwhile, Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra pledged continued alliance cooperation while also calling for maximum effort to avoid civilian casualties. Others providing vocal support to the U.S. effort were Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian.

Not surprisingly, the most outspoken critic of the U.S. military attack against Iraq was Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad, who branded Washington “cowardly” and “imperialistic,” while bemoaning that the “United Nations and international law are now meaningless.” His designated successor, Abdullah Ahmed Badawi, was somewhat more reserved (as is his style), while nonetheless expressing regret over the military action and concern for the impact of conflict in Iraq on the global war on terrorism. Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri found it politically expedient to also condemn the U.S. attack, as did most moderate Muslim leaders in Indonesia. The Iraq attack helped breathe new life into Muslim protest movements that had been forced to maintain a low profile in the wake of the Oct. 12, 2002 Bali terrorist bombings.

China likewise condemned the U.S. decision to not let the UN inspectors finish their job but maintained a generally lower profile, letting the French, Russians, and Germans carry the torch. Nonetheless, the term “hegemon,” absent in recent months, seemed to once again become a politically acceptable term in describing Washington’s unipolar tendencies. For its part, Washington seemed prepared to overlook or minimize Chinese complaints, recognizing that Beijing’s support was much more essential in dealing with tomorrow’s crisis *du jour*, North Korea.

Implications of the War on Iraq

The long-term impact of the war on Iraq regionally and globally will be driven by a number of as yet to be determined factors. One will be the war’s duration and the number of U.S. casualties. By all reasonable standards save one, the war has progressed remarkably smoothly with minimal coalition casualties. The “save one,” however, is U.S. public and media expectations. Despite numerous Pentagon warnings that the war would neither be quick nor easy, many expected – and arguably were led to believe – that the conflict would be over in days. “Shock and awe” were supposed to result in quick capitulation. Nonetheless, the actual accomplishments on the ground (and from the air) have been truly impressive and U.S. public support seems to remain strong, at least for the troops themselves if not always for their civilian leaders. If the truth be told, many in Asia seem quietly encouraged that the war will last weeks (perhaps longer) and has not been casualty free, apparently hoping that this might help temper future U.S. eagerness to apply military solutions to political problems.

It is useful to remember, also, that the official reason for the coalition invasion was to disarm Iraq. While the discovery of weapons of mass destruction is not likely to draw an apology from France, Russia, or others who seemed to think that the UN inspectors were successfully doing their job, a failure to find them is sure to reinforce the views of those who saw the war as unjust, regardless of how quickly or painlessly Saddam is removed.

Unambiguous proof is needed. There will be considerable international and domestic political ramifications if no weapons of mass destruction are found.

Another factor, more important to Asians (and especially Muslim Asians), will be the extent of civilian casualties (again remarkably light despite Iraqi tendencies to keep civilians in harm's way) and the nature of post-Saddam Iraq (including what role, if any, the United Nations will play in administering Iraq once the fighting ends). The consequences here will be hard to measure. Surely, high civilian casualties and a prolonged American occupation of Iraq (especially if it is seen as linked to exploitation of Iraqi oil resources) will exacerbate tensions and generate negative reactions, particularly in Indonesia (where young men are reportedly volunteering to go fight in defense of Iraq), Malaysia, and among the ethnic Muslim areas of the Philippines and elsewhere. On the other hand, the fact that liberated Muslims in Kuwait, Kosovo, and Afghanistan are considerably better off today than before U.S.-led efforts against their oppressors has earned the U.S. little slack in dealing with an Iraqi regime that has killed many more innocent Muslims (in Iran, Kuwait, and in Iraq itself) than have died from U.S. bombing.

Another key factor has little to do with the war on the ground in Iraq. One point Southeast Asian Muslims consistently bring up in discussing U.S. actions is the plight of the Palestinians. Largely overlooked in the Iraq media frenzy has been the appointment of a Palestinian prime minister to share power with Chairman Yasser Arafat and a U.S. pledge to push forward with a "nonnegotiable" road map (in cooperation with Russia, the European Union, and the UN) for moving toward Palestinian statehood once the prime minister is firmly in place. If this new initiative is seen as balanced (i.e., it obtains concessions from Israel as well as from the Palestinian Authority, especially regarding settlements in the occupied territories), this could significantly reduce any long-term negative impact generated by the war on Iraq.

The most important factor could be what Washington does next. One can argue that pursuing the ongoing war in Afghanistan (remember Osama bin Laden?) and mopping up in Iraq should keep Secretary Rumsfeld's Defense Department sufficiently busy for years to come. Yet many others seem convinced that the Taliban/al Qaeda and Saddam are just the top two on a long U.S. hit list, causing many to ask "who's next?"

If Washington's response to the eventual and inevitable downfall of Saddam Hussein's regime is to immediately and harshly turn its attention toward Iran's apparent budding nuclear ambitions or to abruptly abandon its current diplomatic approach toward resolving its differences with Kim Jong-il, many may conclude that perhaps Chirac was right, that it is the Bush administration that now must be contained.

Is North Korea Next?

With U.S. tanks already surrounding Baghdad, the who's next" debate appears to have begun in earnest. Some say Iran; others (jokingly) point to France. But the leading candidate, apparently in its own mind and clearly in the mind of many Asians, is North Korea. One can argue that Pyongyang has gone out of its way to earn this distinction:

pursuing a clandestine uranium enrichment program and then declaring the 1994 Agreed Framework (which froze its earlier nuclear program) “nullified” while expelling International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors and removing monitoring devices and seals from its reprocessing and other nuclear facilities at Yongbyon once it was called to task for its cheating; announcing its formal withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and subsequently threatening to withdraw from the 1953 Armistice, while warning of “World War Three” if the UN Security Council or U.S. attempted to enact sanctions or otherwise try coercion or military force to curtail the North’s suspected nuclear weapons program; restarting its nuclear reactor at Yongbyon and apparently moving spent fuel canisters to its reprocessing facility; launching several missiles into the Sea of Japan (pre-announced and not involving the medium- or long-range missiles that would threaten Japan); threatening “preemptive strikes” against U.S. military forces in Asia; and conducting an intercept mission against a U.S. reconnaissance aircraft 150 miles off North Korea’s coast (which reportedly involved an attempt to force down the unarmed U.S. aircraft); not to mention broadcasting a steady stream of invectives and accusations aimed at the “murderous, criminal Bush regime.”

It is useful to remind ourselves at this point that this is a North Korean-induced crisis. It came about because of a deliberate action on the part of Pyongyang – a decision to circumvent the Agreed Framework by pursuing a uranium enrichment program – and each escalatory step along the way has been initiated by the North. This is not to imply that Washington could not have handled the situation better. It is to stress that the only provocations and saber-rattling to date have emanated from North Korea. While Washington continues to profess a commitment to a peaceful, diplomatic solution – albeit while refusing to enter into new negotiations with the North until it honors its prior promises – North Korea has on the one hand been accusing the U.S. of planning attacks while on the other providing Washington with ample reasons to keep this option on the table.

The good news is that North Korea seemed to be toning down its actions as the quarter drew to a close. The vertical escalation prevalent from October until early March (chronicled above) seems to have been replaced by horizontal escalation; i.e., repeated threats, warnings, and accusations but no new ratcheting up actions. Pyongyang has thus far avoided crossing new presumed “red lines,” such as reprocessing its spent fuel rods, testing long-range missiles that would overfly Japan, exporting fissile material, or by officially declaring itself a nuclear weapons state (with or without a nuclear test to back up this claim).

The reasons behind this presumed restraint are unclear. Perhaps the initiation of hostilities (or more likely the steady progress experienced by coalition forces) in Iraq, combined with the deployment of B-1 and B-52 bombers to Guam “for contingencies purposes” and the movement of F-117 stealth aircraft and an aircraft carrier battle group to the Peninsula (ostensibly in support of an annual U.S.-ROK exercise) have gotten Pyongyang’s attention. New ROK President Roh Moo-hyun’s strong support for the U.S.-ROK alliance and for multilateral dialogue in which South Korea as well as the U.S. plays a key role has also narrowed the previously exploited gap between Seoul and

Washington. A harder Chinese stance against North Korean provocations and warnings against Pyongyang pursuing a nuclear program no doubt played a positive role as well.

Can Multilateralism Work?

For its part, the U.S. continues to reject direct bilateral negotiations, although it has demonstrated some flexibility in this stance. In Washington, during the Jan. 5-7, 2003 Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG) Meeting, Seoul, Tokyo, and Washington once again called on North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons ambitions. The Joint Declaration stressed that “North Korea’s relations with the entire international community hinge on its taking prompt and verifiable action to completely dismantle its nuclear weapons program and come into full compliance with its international nuclear commitments.” But, the joint pronouncement also included several attempts by the Bush administration to wave olive branches in Pyongyang’s direction, first by noting that the U.S. “has no intention of invading North Korea” and then by stating that “the U.S. is willing to talk to North Korea about how it will meet its obligations to the international community. However, . . . the United States will not provide quid pro quos to North Korea to live up to its existing obligations.”

The subtle difference between *talking to* as opposed to *negotiating with* the DPRK provided Washington with some breathing room in its dialogue with both Tokyo and Seoul and set the stage for one more attempt at U.S. flexibility; namely, Washington’s call for multilateral dialogue to address the nuclear situation (since many countries were involved or affected) but with the prospect of bilateral U.S.-DPRK consultations being permitted within this larger multilateral context. Washington also stressed that it was prepared to pursue a previously promised “bold approach” toward North Korea once it comes back into compliance, in keeping with the TCOG declaration’s promise of a “return to a better path leading toward improved relations with the international community, thereby securing peace, prosperity, and security for all the countries of Northeast Asia.”

President Bush made it clear that he personally strongly supports a multilateral solution to what he described as a regional rather than strictly U.S. problem during his March 6 press conference: “I think the best way to deal with this is in multilateral fashion, by convincing those nations [China, South Korea, Japan, and Russia were specifically mentioned] they must stand up to their responsibility, along with the United States, to convince Kim Jong-il that the development of a nuclear arsenal is not in his nation’s interest; and that should he want help in easing the suffering of the North Korean people, the best way to achieve that help is to not proceed forward.”

In fact, there was some progress on addressing the North Korean crisis on the multilateral front this quarter. In early January, the 35 member nations of the IAEA Board of Governors issued a unanimous resolution calling on North Korea to fully comply with its NPT obligations. The North’s response, regrettably, was to officially withdraw from the NPT. As a result, the IAEA Board of Governors on Feb. 12 declared that the DPRK was in material breach of its nuclear nonproliferation commitments, thereby referring the

issue to the UNSC. The vote was unanimous, although Russia abstained. China voted in favor of the resolution but then took diplomatic action during the rest of the quarter to keep the issue off the UNSC's agenda. It has since relented and the UNSC was to finally address the issue in early April. Public statements by the U.S. that it would not seek UN sanctions against North Korea at this time no doubt contributed to the change in Chinese thinking, as did continued annoyance over Pyongyang's belligerent, recalcitrant behavior. Meanwhile, President Chirac is on record calling Kim Jong-il's government "a thoroughly abject regime," in this instance putting his views more closely in line with those of President Bush.

Whether all this will lead to constructive dialogue among all the concerned parties or more of the same next quarter remains to be seen, however, bilateral (U.S.-DPRK, North-South Korea, and perhaps others) talks imbedded in a broader multilateral setting seems to be a workable compromise if all parties are truly intent on defusing the situation. Whether the Korean nuclear crisis will give the UNSC a new chance to demonstrate its relevance – and whether it will seize this opportunity if it presents itself – also remains to be seen.

Just in Case We Needed More Bad News

As if concerns about Iraq and North Korea were not enough, the quarter closed amid an uproar over Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), an apparently new form of pneumonia that has quickly spread across the globe. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 1,622 cases of SARS had been diagnosed as of March 31, resulting in 58 deaths, and the number of cases is growing about 9-12 percent a day. Scientists think they have identified the virus that causes the disease, but they are not sure how it spreads. The death rate among the infected is 3-4 percent, and the virus is about as contagious as influenza or Hepatitis A.

The outbreak was first identified and treated in Hanoi, and its effects are most visible in Hong Kong, where entire apartment buildings have been quarantined and most citizens have taken to wearing surgical masks. While Hong Kong is seen as the epicenter of the disease and has been an important transmission point, SARS is thought to have emerged from China's Guangdong Province. The original case was diagnosed as "atypical pneumonia" in November 2002. Unfortunately, Chinese health authorities did little initially to inform health authorities nationally or internationally as the outbreak spread within and outside its borders. To this day, Chinese authorities appear to be playing down the disease and the extent of danger in China.

Nonetheless, fear of the disease is intensifying. Reports of symptoms among passengers on a flight from Asia resulted in the quarantine of an aircraft when it landed in California. All components of the tourism industry, and especially airlines, are being badly hit as the WHO and national governments issue travel advisories. Fear of contagion has discouraged people from visiting public spaces such as restaurants and department stores. Trade shows and conventions are being canceled, as is business travel throughout the region. China's largest trade show, the China Export Commodity Fair, is scheduled to

begin April 15 in Guangzhou. Last year, more than 120,000 people attended the fair, closing deals worth nearly \$17 billion. It is doubtful that that success will be replicated amid the climate of fear that now exists.

According to Morgan Stanley's Southeast Asian analyst, Andy Xie, SARS poses the gravest economic threat to the region since the 1997 financial crisis. Xie cut his yearly growth estimate for East Asia (excluding Japan) from 5.1 percent to 4.5 percent; two more months of the epidemic could tip several economies – Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan – into recession. One estimate shows Hong Kong's GDP being reduced by up to \$815 million a month; over a full year, up to 6.0 percent of GDP. Other forecasts have cut growth in Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Malaysia by 0.5 percent. China's growth seems least affected – an about 0.3 percent decline is forecast – but this could get worse once the full extent of the problem is known.

While the new virus appears to have evolved and spread naturally, the delays and difficulties in identifying, reporting, and isolating the disease once again remind us of the global vulnerability to bio-terrorism and the relative ease with which an organism, in today's highly mobile, jet-age world, can spread from a remote region quickly around the globe. Economies and industries (especially international aviation) already weakened by the initiation of hostilities in Iraq may prove particularly vulnerable to this new disease. The double whammy of the war in Iraq and SARS caused a 30 percent drop in tourist arrivals in Hong Kong during the last week of March alone. While the war could be over soon, it is impossible to say how long-lasting or pervasive the SARS pandemic will become.

Regional Chronology **January - March 2003**

Jan. 2, 2003: Taiwan Vice DM Chen Chao-min says the U.S. military is likely to participate in the 2003 "Han Kuang" exercises.

Jan. 3, 2003: China warns the U.S. against taking part in Taiwan's annual war games.

Jan. 5, 2003: Ariz. Sen. John McCain says that the U.S. should allow Japan to develop nuclear weapons.

Jan. 5, 2003: PRC lodges protest against Japanese leasing of land on disputed Senkaku Islands.

Jan. 6, 2003: Indonesian police present first case to prosecutors against Bali bombing suspect Amrozi.

Jan. 6-12, 2003: Burma's junta leader Senior Gen. Than Shwe visits China.

Jan. 6, 2003: IAEA issues resolution calling on the DPRK to fully comply with its nuclear agreements.

Jan. 7, 2003: Trilateral Coordination Oversight Group meets; issues joint statement supporting IAEA resolution.

Jan. 9-12, 2003: Prime Minister Koizumi visits Moscow.

Jan. 10, 2003: North Korea announces withdrawal from the NPT, effective Jan. 11.

Jan 10, 2003: President Bush and PRC President Jiang Zemin confer by phone regarding North Korea's NPT withdrawal.

Jan. 10, 2003: President Putin and PM Koizumi issue joint statement condemning North Korea's NPT decision.

Jan. 12-14, 2003: Asst. Secretary of State James Kelly visits Seoul, meets ROK President-elect Roh Moo-hyun.

Jan. 14, 2003: Indonesian police arrest two more Bali bombing suspects.

Jan. 14-16, 2003: Asst. Secretary Kelly visits Beijing; China offers to host direct talks between the U.S. and DPRK.

Jan 14, 2003: PM Koizumi visits Yasukuni Shrine; PRC and ROK immediately condemn visit.

Jan. 15, 2003: President-elect Roh visits U.S. military headquarters in Seoul.

Jan. 16-19, 2003: Under Secretary of State John Bolton visits China.

Jan. 16, 2003: Asst. Secretary Kelly visits Singapore.

Jan. 17-18, 2003: Asst. Secretary Kelly visits Indonesia.

Jan. 17-18, 2003: Russian Deputy FM Losyukov visits Beijing to discuss North Korean nuclear program.

Jan. 17, 2003: Japanese FM Kawaguchi and President-elect Roh meet in Seoul and agree to build closer bilateral relations.

Jan. 19, 2003: Asst. Secretary Kelly visits Tokyo.

Jan. 19, 2003: Chinese FM Tang Jiaxuan meets Secretary of State Colin Powell in New York.

Jan. 18-21, 2003: Deputy FM Losyukov visits Pyongyang, meets with DPRK leader Kim Jong-il.

Jan. 20, 2003: Japan announces it will cut its contributions to the UN by 25 percent.

Jan 21, 2003: India signs deal with Russia to lease four long-range bombers and two submarines.

Jan. 21-23, 2003: Under Secretary Bolton visits South Korea.

Jan. 21-24, 2003: DPRK chief delegate Kim Ryong Song and South Korea's Unification Minister Jeong Se-hyun conduct Ninth Inter-Korean Ministerial talks in Seoul.

Jan. 23-25, 2003: Under Secretary Bolton visits Japan.

Jan. 24, 2003: JDA Chief Ishiba tells Diet that Japan could launch a preemptive strike if Pyongyang begins preparations for a missile attack.

Jan. 25, 2003: President Bush calls PM Koizumi; both agree to seek a peaceful solution to the Korean crisis.

Jan. 25, 2003: China Airlines flight from Taipei lands in Shanghai via Hong Kong, the first island carrier in 50 years to land in mainland China.

Jan. 27-29, 2003: South Korean envoy Lim Dong Won visits Pyongyang, meets with No. 2 Kim Yong-sun, but not Kim Jong-il.

Feb. 3, 2003: Defense Secretary Rumsfeld puts 24 long-range bombers on alert for possible deployment within range of North Korea to deter "opportunism."

Feb. 4, 2003: FM Tang meets Secretary Powell in New York.

Feb. 5, 2003: The ROK and DPRK re-open section of their land border for the first time in half a century. Nearly 100 South Korean tourism officials travel by bus to the Mt. Kumgang resort.

Feb. 5, 2003: North Korea announces it has reactivated its Yongbyon nuclear plant to produce electricity.

Feb. 6, 2003: North Korea warns that a decision to send more troops to the region could result in a preemptive attack on U.S. forces.

Feb. 7, 2003: President Bush phones President Jiang to urge him to do more to help resolve the North Korean nuclear standoff.

Feb. 10, 2003: South Korean opposition politicians demand special prosecutor be named to investigate government payments to the DPRK before President Kim went to Pyongyang.

Feb. 12, 2003: The IAEA declares the DPRK in breach of its nuclear nonproliferation commitments and refers the matter to the Security Council.

Feb. 13, 2003: China and Russia issue statement that the standoff over North Korea's nuclear program should be resolved through direct talks between Washington and Pyongyang.

Feb. 13, 2003: Japan urges the DPRK to reopen dialogue with the IAEA.

Feb. 13, 2003: DM Shigeru announces Japan would launch a military strike if it had firm evidence that the DPRK was ready to attack with ballistic missiles.

Feb. 14 2003: Outgoing President Kim apologizes for scandal surrounding the payment of money to the DPRK.

Feb. 14, 2003: DPRK dismisses the IAEA decision to refer the nuclear crisis to the U.N. as "interference in [its] internal affairs," calling the IAEA "America's lapdog."

Feb. 16, 2003: Hyundai Asan Corp Chairman apologizes for secret payment of \$500 million to DPRK to secure business rights and bring about the landmark June 2000 North-South summit.

Feb. 18, 2003: DPRK threatens to abandon the 1953 Korean War armistice if sanctions are imposed.

Feb. 18, 2003: Deranged arsonist starts fire on Taegu subway train, killing hundreds of ROK commuters.

Feb. 20, 2003: A DPRK MiG enters South Korean airspace (the first since 1983) for two minutes before being pursued across the border by South Korean fighters.

Feb. 20, 2003: Burma military junta invites the U.S. to open a "constructive dialogue toward humanitarian, economic and political development" on Burma's political future, saying the regime would "welcome American advice on making the transition to a stable democracy."

Feb. 22-23, 2003: Secretary Powell visits Tokyo.

Feb. 23-24, 2003: Secretary Powell visits Beijing; urges China to do more to resolve the DPRK nuclear crisis.

Feb. 24, 2003: China rejects Secretary Powell's appeal for a regional approach; calls for direct talks between the U.S. and the DPRK.

Feb. 24, 2003: The DPRK fires antiship missile into the East Sea/Sea of Japan.

Feb. 25, 2003: Roh Moo-hyun is inaugurated as ROK president, meets separately with PM Koizumi and Secretary Powell.

Feb. 25, 2003: Secretary Powell announces the U.S. will donate 40,000 metric tons of food to the DPRK.

Feb. 25, 2003: The UN charges former Indonesian armed forces chief Gen. Wiranto, among others, with crimes against humanity for violence surrounding East Timor's 1999 vote for independence.

Feb. 27, 2003: The DPRK restarts nuclear reactor at Yongbyon.

Feb. 28, 2003: Philippine President Macapagal-Arroyo orders military to defeat the Abu Sayyaf within 90 days, while chief of the armed forces announces that commanders who fail to perform will be replaced.

March 2, 2003: DPRK fighters intercept a USAF reconnaissance plane over the Sea of Japan about 150 miles off the DPRK coast.

March 2, 2003: Cuban President Castro meets PM Koizumi in Tokyo, offers to mediate the stand-off with the DPRK.

March 3, 2003: Kim Jong-il warns of a possible nuclear war if the U.S. attacks the DPRK.

March 3, 2003: JDA head Ishiba tells Diet that the SDF cannot protect Japanese people from North Korean ballistic missiles and can only minimize the damage.

March 3-8, 2003: Relatives and supporters of Japanese citizens abducted by the DPRK visit Washington.

March 4, 2003: The U.S. and South Korea begin a month-long annual joint military exercise "Foal Eagle" on the Korean Peninsula.

March 4, 2003: The U.S. deploys 24 B-1 and B-52 bombers Guam to deter any aggression by the DPRK.

March 5, 2003: The 10th National People's Congress (NPC) opens in Beijing.

March 5, 2003: President Macapagal-Arroyo announces there will be no combat role for U.S. troops in the southern Philippines.

March 5, 2003: France, Russia, and Germany pledge to block any UN resolution authorizing war in Iraq.

March 6, 2003: Secretary Rumsfeld says U.S. troops have become “intrusive” to South Korea and could be relocated or redeployed.

March 7, 2003: FM Tang meets with Secretary Powell on the sidelines of the UNSC meeting on Iraq.

March 7, 2003: U.S. Senate ratifies a treaty requiring the U.S. and Russia to reduce their nuclear arsenals by about two-thirds over the next decade.

March 8, 2003: DPRK rejects U.S. proposal for multilateral talks, reiterates demand for direct dialogue.

March 10, 2003: DPRK test fires antiship missile in the Sea of Japan; also accuses the U.S. of plotting an atomic attack.

March 10, 2003: Presidents Bush and Jiang have a phone conversation on North Korea and Iraq.

March 11, 2003: Washington issues protest against Pyongyang spy plane intercept.

March 11, 2003: UNICEF officials announces the DPRK will run out of food by June unless new aid pledges are given.

March 11, 2003: The U.S. announces it will send six radar-avoiding F-117A “stealth” warplanes to South Korea for “Foal Eagle.”

March 12, 2003: The U.S. resumes military reconnaissance flights in the Sea of Japan.

March 12, 2003: Japan announces it is deploying an Aegis equipped destroyer to the Sea of Japan.

March 12, 2003: Indonesian Brig. Gen. Noer Muis sentenced to five years in prison for failing to prevent civilian massacres during East Timor vote for independence in 1999.

March 13, 2003: South Korea urges DPRK to enter into multilateral talks with U.S.

March 14, 2003: The World Health Organization announces hundreds of people in China, Hong Kong, and Vietnam have fallen ill from a mysterious respiratory illness.

March 14, 2003: President Roh, yielding to pressure, authorizes a special prosecutor to investigate payments to the DPRK.

March 16, 2003: VP Dick Cheney says North Korea nuclear program could force Japan to “readdress the nuclear question.”

March 16, 2003: At the conclusion of the NPC, President Jiang steps down and Hu Jintao is named his successor. Wen Jiabao becomes prime minister.

March 17, 2003: PM Wen announces Beijing seeks to resume dialogue with Taiwan under the “one China” principle.

March 17, 2003: President Bush issues 48-hour ultimatum to Saddam Hussein.

March 18, 2003: Russia’s lower house of Parliament indefinitely postpones ratification of U.S.-Russia nuclear arms reduction treaty because of U.S. threat of war against Iraq.

March 18, 2003: U.S. National Institute of Health announces measures to prevent the spread of a mysterious pneumonia.

March 18, 2003: President Bush calls Hu Jintao and congratulates him on his election as new PRC president.

March 20, 2003: U.S. Operation Iraqi Freedom begins against Iraq.

March 24, 2003: President Bush complains via telephone to President Putin about Russian firms providing military hardware to Iraq.

March 26, 2003: Russian FM Ivanov harshly criticizes U.S. action in Iraq.

March 26, 2003: South Korean Foreign Minister Yoon Yang-kwan meets with Secretary Powell in Washington.

March 27, 2003: JDA head Ishiba states that Japan will not develop nuclear weapons even if North Korea does so.

March 28, 2003: Japan launches first two of four planned spy satellites.

March 31, 2003: Matsui “Godzilla” Hideki makes major league debut with RBI single on the first pitch in NY Yankees season-opener.