

Comparative Connections

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Regional Overview:

New Insights into U.S. East Asia Strategy

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Several senior administration officials provided insights into the Bush administration's East Asia and global strategic thinking this quarter. National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley explained "three basic insights" that guide East Asia policy, reinforcing the centrality of U.S. alliances (a common theme in Asia policy pronouncements in the past but one that had been strangely absent in major Asia addresses by President George W. Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice); Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill provided the most comprehensive statement to date regarding administration views of East Asia community building, pointing out Washington's concern about the "Pan-Asianism vs. Pan-Pacificism" debate; and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld made it clear that Washington prefers global, more inclusive, task-oriented multilateralism ("the mission defines the coalition") over Cold War institutions that will become increasingly irrelevant if and when they fail to adjust to new strategic realities.

One such "coalition of the willing," the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), celebrated its third anniversary, with Under Secretary of State Robert Joseph calling for more nations to come on board and for those already participating to "think innovatively, enforce aggressively, and engage regularly." A major PSI air interdiction exercise off Australia drew participants from six countries, with observers from 26 more. Another "PSI-like" exercise would have represented a historic first until China and South Korea became last-minute no-shows. The Chinese did, however, send observers to a major U.S. military exercise held near Guam. Meanwhile, the Six-Party Talks remained a coalition of the unwilling as North Korea continued to boycott the talks amid preparations for a missile test which, on the Fourth of July, may have sounded a death knell for the talks . . . or maybe not!

In Southeast Asia, the nations of ASEAN took a small step closer to multilateral defense cooperation with the convening of the inaugural ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting in early May. Many reconvened in Singapore during the Shangri-La Dialogue, which involved defense officials from 22 Asia-Pacific nations (including Secretary Rumsfeld). Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia took major steps toward greater actual defense cooperation in patrolling the Malacca Strait, while Malaysia Defense Minister Najib proposed the establishment of a regional relief center to coordinate regional responses to humanitarian disasters. When it came to responding to a neighbor's call for help, however, ASEAN was conspicuously quiet, with only Malaysia sending assistance to

help restore order in Timor-Leste, where the democratic process is struggling to take hold. Meanwhile, the democratic process is nowhere to be found in Myanmar (Burma), where the ruling junta disappointed its ASEAN colleagues by once again extending Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest for another year.

Three “basic insights” into U.S. Asia strategy

In early April, President Bush's national security advisor, Steve Hadley, gave a speech at a Strategic Asia Forum in Washington, D.C. sponsored by the National Bureau for Asia Research (NBR) which focused on U.S. security strategy in both South and East Asia. He noted that between them there are 1.7 billion people who now choose their own leaders, even while lamenting that a few nations, like North Korea and Myanmar, “have not even begun the journey along freedom's path.”

His South Asia comments focused on Washington's “more strategic relationship” with India, arguing in support of the U.S.-India civil nuclear cooperation initiative, which will “enhance America's security.” (By quarter's end, many in Congress seemed to agree with this assertion, as legislation to approve the nuclear cooperation agreement with India cleared the House Foreign Relations Committee by an overwhelming 37-5 majority.)

Hadley also noted that the Bush administration's strategy in East Asia is based on “three basic insights.” First, “our most important relations in the region are with our traditional allies, nations that share the values of democracy and freedom.” These nations, Hadley argued are “the cornerstone of our approach to the region,” adding that this approach could be called “working East Asia from the outside in.”

The centrality of U.S. East Asia alliances should not come as a revelation since they have for decades been referred to as the “foundation” of U.S. strategy in the region. The reference was refreshing nonetheless, since comments about the vital role that Washington's East Asia alliances play in regional security thinking had been largely absent from major Asia policy addresses given in the past year by both President Bush and Secretary Rice, and Secretary Rumsfeld, while charged with revitalizing and reinforcing these security arrangements, has made clear his preference for “coalitions of the willing” (more on this later).

In addition to America's four allies in East Asia – Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand (Australia is usually included in the list but technically is an Asia-Pacific rather than East Asia ally and hence was omitted here) – several other “key friends” were singled out: Mongolia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. Southeast Asia watchers will find the inclusion of Malaysia particularly interesting; this would never have been the case during the Mahathir years.

The second basic insight is “working with our partners in East Asia to develop cooperative and creative approaches to regional and global challenges.” Here he specifically noted how Washington, working with its Asian partners in responding to the December 2004 tsunami, was able to respond “more quickly than international relief

agencies.” Later in the speech, he also cited the importance of regional exchanges, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, the U.S.-ASEAN Enhanced Partnership, and the Six-Party Talks.

Third, he noted that the Bush administration “welcomed the rise of a China that is a responsible stakeholder in the international system; a China that cooperates with us to address common challenges and mutual interests.” But he also noted that Washington had “made it clear” to Beijing that it “must change policies that exacerbate tensions,” singling out China’s “non-transparent military expansion” (a theme reemphasized by Rumsfeld in June); its “quest to lock up energy supplies, rather than participate in energy markets”; and Beijing’s support of “resource-rich countries with poor records of democracy and human rights.”

He did attempt to put Beijing’s (and New Delhi’s) mind at ease on one point, however, insisting that “we have resisted the temptation of crude balance-of-power politics, seeking to play India off against China,” arguing that both need to be “constructive players” and that the U.S. “can and should have constructive relations with each.” Reinforcing the Bush administration’s central international theme, he noted that while many say the 21st century will be the “Asian century,” President Bush believes it will be “freedom’s century.”

Evolving U.S. attitudes: “Pan-Asianism vs. Pan-Pacificism”

While Hadley only paid lip service in his remarks to Washington’s support for regional integration, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Christopher Hill provided the Bush administration’s most definitive remarks on this topic, and on Washington’s response to East Asia community building, during remarks on “The U.S. and Southeast Asia” at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy in Singapore May 22.

Previously, the Bush administration had been circumspect regarding East Asia community-building in general and the December 2005 inaugural East Asia Summit (EAS) in particular, stating that it reserved judgement on the EAS until its mission and objectives become clear but that, in principle, it supports more “inclusive” multilateral approaches (read: those involving the U.S.). However, during his Singapore speech, Hill finally approached the subject head on. He noted that U.S. engagement with Southeast Asia “continues to broaden and deepen,” further observing that “the dynamism of the region means that our relationship is in a constant state of evolution, which has given rise to renewed debate and discussion about regional fora, and whether they should be inclusive or exclusive.” As a result, Hill noted, the debate over “pan-Asianism vs. pan-Pacificism has also re-emerged.”

The U.S. has no objection to East Asia regionalism *per se*, Hill argued, noting that “it is entirely understandable that Asia is looking to strengthen its own regional institutions, just as other regional groupings in other parts of the world have done the same. This drive is a reflection of the remarkable and still growing pattern of intra-Asian economic and financial integration, and is not surprising – and we welcome it.”

Hill then repeated concerns about the proliferation of multilateral initiatives and the danger of “meeting fatigue”: “But we need to think hard and clearly about the question of how we can integrate pan-Asian and trans-Pacific fora. We have heard much debate about the East Asia Summit. Before coming to any conclusions, we need to look at the whole landscape – and indeed the seascape – of proliferating regional fora – ASEAN Plus Three, APEC, ARF, and the EAS – to determine how the pieces can fit better together. The goal should be to achieve synergy and avoid redundancy and duplication.”

Hill also reaffirmed Washington’s concern about how the EAS would relate to broader-based multilateral efforts involving the U.S.: “With respect to the East Asia Summit, the U.S. continues to watch with interest how this forum will develop. As I mentioned earlier, APEC and the ARF are vital components of our relationship with Asia and Southeast Asia. We want to continue to work with you to ensure we don’t dilute the effectiveness of these institutions and the important cooperation they foster. The United States is and will remain deeply involved in the transformation of Southeast Asia.”

In short, the jury remains out. Washington is likely to continue to reserve judgement about the EAS and closely watch ASEAN Plus Three (A+3) and other regional community-building efforts to determine how they ultimately will interact with broader regional organizations, both institutionalized (like the ARF and APEC) and ad hoc (like the Six-Party Talks and the Proliferation Security Initiative). To the extent that “Pan-Asian” efforts signal their willingness to coexist with Washington, and are not seen as threatening or attempting to undermine Washington’s bilateral alliances, its own central role in East Asian security affairs, or the broader Asia-Pacific regional institutions in which it participates, there is little reason to expect objections from Washington or a serious effort to discourage or derail regional community-building efforts.

‘The coalition defines the mission’

Washington’s generally benign view of East Asia regionalism notwithstanding, both Hadley and Hill made it clear that the Bush administration prefers broader-based efforts that included Washington. This message was further reinforced by Defense Secretary Rumsfeld during his address in early June at the annual International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, the Asia-Pacific region’s largest unofficial gathering of defense officials and security specialists.

While noting that “countries could join together as they wish,” Rumsfeld stressed that most problems were global and thus lent themselves to multinational rather than single country or small group solutions. He also unapologetically stood by his “mission defines the coalition, not vice-versa” mantra, citing the success of the Bush administration’s Proliferation Security Initiative, a “coalition of the willing” involving some 70 nations who share a commitment to prevent weapons of mass destruction (WMD) from being transported to or from terrorists or rogue regimes.

In response to a specific follow-up about the invitation to Iran to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO, involving China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan), Rumsfeld commented that he found it “passing strange” that an organization whose charter proclaims a commitment to combat terrorism would invite a known supporter of terrorism to join its ranks.

(While Tehran has not officially joined the SCO, its president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, did attend the June 15 SCO Summit as an observer. Iran, India, Pakistan, and Mongolia are SCO observers; Afghan President Hamid Karzai and ASEAN’s secretary general were also invited to attend as “special guests.” Ahmadinejad’s presence at a time when Iran was facing increased Western criticism over its suspected nuclear weapons aspirations and his thinly veiled criticism of the U.S. when addressing the gathering garnered more international attention than the summit itself did. The 2006 SCO Declaration did not repeat last year’s demand that the U.S. set a date for departure from Central Asian antiterrorism bases.)

During the Shangri-La Q&A session, Rumsfeld also questioned whether institutions established at the onset of the Cold War – the United Nations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund were three cited examples – were still relevant in the post-Cold War environment. As Truman did back then, Rumsfeld argued, today’s leaders should think about initiating or fashioning new institutions, rather than thinking that those that existed 50-plus years ago “are necessarily properly arranged for today,” adding, “I don’t think they are.”

Rumsfeld also noted that, “in the security area, we need more peacekeepers in this world.” He called for more countries to participate in peacekeeping efforts and for more effort to help train and equip those willing to do so, noting that “it’s a painfully slow process when the United Nations gets involved in peacekeeping. . . I think we can do an awful lot better job in a number of these areas than we’re doing.”

Demystifying China. Unlike his presentation at the 2005 Shangri-La Dialogue, when comments on China (and the war on terrorism) dominated his formal remarks, only one short paragraph in a four-page prepared text referenced the PRC. Rumsfeld first praised China’s “great potential” and its “strong economic growth” and “industrious workforce.” But, he cautioned, “there are aspects of China’s actions that can complicate their [sic] relationships with other nations. The lack of transparency with respect to their military investments understandably causes concerns for some of its neighbors.”

That was it! Beyond this, Rumsfeld largely stressed the positive: “in the past five years, in terms of defense and security cooperation, the United States has done more things, with more nations, in more constructive ways, than at any other time in our history.” While some in the U.S. and overseas have questioned U.S. involvement in and commitment toward Asia, “the United States is and always will be a Pacific nation,” Rumsfeld reminded the audience, “we must, and we will, lean forward and stay fully engaged in this part of the world.”

If China was not a central theme in his prepared remarks, it remained the subject of over half the questions posed to Rumsfeld during the on-the-record Q&A session that followed his prepared remarks. While several questioners tried to draw him into a discussion of the Chinese threat, he was not about to go there, perhaps remembering the challenges he received last year when he questioned China's growing defense expenditures and expanding power projection forces.

Instead, he merely called for China to be more transparent about its military capabilities and doctrine. In a clear reference to China, he noted that "any country clearly has the right to make decisions as to how it wants to invest its resources. That's fair." But, he noted, "the rest of the world has the right, indeed on occasion the need, to try to develop a good understanding of exactly why they're doing that." It would be in Beijing's interest, Rumsfeld argued, if Beijing "demystified" what it was doing militarily. He predicted that China would eventually see the wisdom in doing just that.

Even on the contentious issue of Taiwan, Rumsfeld merely observed that we should "take China at its word" when it says it seeks peaceful reunification as its first choice, noting that the U.S. and the people on Taiwan also want a peaceful resolution to the problem.

Rumsfeld also stressed that the term "responsible stakeholder," while coined by Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick, represented a "coordinated U.S. perspective" regarding China that would remain a central tenet of China-U.S. relations even if Zoellick were to leave office (which he subsequently announced that he planned to do this fall). The U.S. had no "grand design" in Asia, other than to "contribute to peace and stability," stressing again that the goal of U.S.-China military-to-military relations was "to demystify one another."

Unfortunately, the Chinese Defense Ministry and Peoples' Liberation Army chose once again to boycott the gathering – China was represented by a relatively low-level foreign ministry official and the heads of several Chinese think tanks – thus missing an important opportunity to demonstrate China's professed commitment to greater defense cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

It's all about freedom! Reinforcing the central theme of the Bush administration's 2006 *National Security Strategy*, Rumsfeld also stressed the importance of promoting and preserving freedom and democracy, noting "paradoxically, more nations are freer than ever before, yet freedom is increasingly under assault." As expected, he warned against "violent extremism" in the region, while challenging North Korea to "choose a path which leads back to membership in the community of nations"; a relatively gentle (for the Defense Department) admonition. He also gave Russia a mixed review, stating on the one hand that "on the whole, our relationship is better than it has been for decades," while cautioning that "in other ways, Russia has been less helpful, as when they [sic] seek to constrain the independence and freedom of action of some neighboring countries."

Finally, Rumsfeld acknowledged that the U.S. had to be more sensitive to world public opinion and admitted that he was concerned about Washington's image, noting that "every country would prefer to be loved and to be respected." But he also argued that the facts showed that Washington had provided great support to Muslim people from Bosnia to Kosovo and that the Afghan people are now "using their soccer stadiums today for soccer instead of cutting peoples' heads off and that's an improvement."

Nonetheless, a Pew Research Center survey released a week after Rumsfeld's remarks showed that the U.S. global image has again slipped and that support for the war on terrorism has declined, even among close U.S. allies like Japan. Of note, of 15 countries surveyed (including the U.S.), only two – Japan and Pakistan – saw North Korea as a greater danger to world peace than Iran or the Israeli-Palestinian conflict . . . but that was before Kim Jong-il's late June attention-getting tactics!

The talks are dead; long live the talks!

The quarter began with hopes that the informal gathering of senior representatives from all six parties – North and South Korea, China, Japan, Russia, and the U.S. – at the track two Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue (NEACD) meeting in Tokyo in early April would somehow help kick-start the six-party process. This was not meant to be. Instead, it appeared to confirm suspicions that the official Six-Party Talks had stalemated as Washington held firm in its refusal to enter into separate bilateral negotiations with the DRPK outside of the six-party process and Pyongyang continued to demand the lifting of U.S. "economic sanctions" as a precondition to its returning to the talks despite admonitions by the other five that it should "promptly" return to the negotiating table.

This would turn out to not be the only admonition Pyongyang was to ignore. In early June, U.S. intelligence sources revealed what appeared to be preparations by Pyongyang for a long-range missile launch. The five parties were unanimous in warning Pyongyang (albeit with varying levels of intensity) not to go ahead with the launch, with Seoul joining Washington and Tokyo in warning of severe consequences if a *Taepodong 2* missile were fired. While it appeared at quarter's end that Pyongyang may have only been bluffing or that the warnings were being taken seriously, this changed on the Fourth of July with the launch of a *Taepodong 2* and six other missiles into the Sea of Japan.

The response to this act of defiance will be discussed next quarter. Here I'll merely speculate on its impact on the six-party process, which many had pronounced dead, even before the (failed) *Taepodong* launch. But, as my Pacific Forum colleagues Scott Snyder, Brad Glosserman, and I argued in a U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) *PeaceBrief* in early May (available on the USIP website [www.usip.org] or as *PacNet 22* on the Pacific Forum website [www.pacforum.org]), despite its limitations and despite the Bush administration's judgment that North Korea was highly unlikely to negotiate away its nuclear weapons program even before the missile activity, the six-party framework may still have an important role to play as a mechanism for crisis management. Indeed, it looks like next quarter will begin much like this one, amid hopes that an "informal" six-party meeting may be convened, this time by Beijing, to deal with the current DPRK-

induced crisis, allowing the six-party process to demonstrate its crisis management capabilities.

Proliferation Security Initiative flies/sails on!

Washington's favorite "coalition of the willing," the Proliferation Security Initiative, celebrated its third anniversary in late June. Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security Robert Joseph, while attending a June 23 meeting in Warsaw, Poland of 66 supporting nations, called this U.S.-instigated initiative "a standard of good nonproliferation behavior" and a "vital component" in the fight against WMD proliferation.

While others in the administration have been careful not to link the PSI to specific target nations, Joseph was not, telling his audience that "we are here because we understand the need to defeat the WMD threats posed by states like Iran and North Korea, terrorist groups like al-Qaeda, and the facilitators willing to buy and sell sensitive technology for these states and groups." He stressed that the PSI is not a membership organization but rather "a series of ongoing, voluntary activities," and that "governments have participated in PSI in various ways and have undertaken varying levels of constructive engagement."

He also claimed a number of operational successes, pointing to "around two dozen instances" when the United States and PSI partners in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East have prevented "transfers of equipment and materials to WMD and missile programs in countries of concern." He called on more nations to join this effort, citing the Malacca Strait as an area of primary concern, while calling on all PSI participants to "think innovatively, enforce aggressively and engage regularly."

One method of engagement is through periodic PSI exercises. According to Joseph, 23 air, land, or maritime PSI training exercises have been conducted to date. One major PSI exercise, *Pacific Protector 06*, the first air interdiction PSI exercise to be held in the Asia-Pacific region, took place off Darwin in early April, involving military forces from six nations: host nation Australia, plus Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, the U.K., and the U.S.; another 26 countries sent delegates or observers. South Korea and China were invited to participate but declined. Even the DPRK was encouraged to send observers (during a joint CSCAP/ARF WMD Study Group meeting in Singapore in late March) but elected to protest the exercise instead.

China and South Korea were supposed to participate in a "PSI-like" multilateral naval exercise in late May involving the U.S., Japan, Canada, and Russia but both dropped out of the maritime chase portion of the exercise out of fears of offending the North Koreans. This segment involved the mock pursuit of a suspicious ship (suspected of smuggling goods and people – changed from its original suspected WMD cargo to make it more politically acceptable) transiting from Shanghai to Vladivostok. South Korea did participate in the second phase, a mock boarding and inspection of the ship at the port of Busan, ROK.

China did send observers to a major U.S. exercise, *Valiant Shield*, near Guam in mid-June. A total of 10 PLA officials attended the exercise, aimed at enhancing joint combat skills and interoperability. Adm. William J. Fallon, the top U.S. commander in the Pacific, said before the exercises began that implicit in the invitation was the expectation that China would reciprocate. Representatives from Japan, Australia, South Korea, Russia and Singapore were also invited to attend this major integrated joint training involving approximately 22,000 U.S. military personnel, 30 ships (including three aircraft carrier battle groups), and 280 aircraft (including Guam-based fighters and *B-2* stealth bombers).

Southeast Asia defense cooperation growing

In Southeast Asia, the nations of ASEAN took a small step closer to multilateral defense cooperation with the convening of the inaugural ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting in Kuala Lumpur in early May. The ministers agreed on four main points: to promote regional peace and stability through dialogue and cooperation; to give guidance in the field of defense and security within ASEAN and with dialogue partners; to promote mutual trust and confidence through greater understanding of defense policies and threat perceptions, as well as enhanced of transparency and openness; and to contribute to the establishment of the ASEAN Security Community. The meeting itself was mainly focussed on the issues of human security and transnational crimes, plus cooperation for disaster relief. The ministers agreed that “security challenges remained in the region and that continued efforts should be undertaken to address them,” although they did not identify these challenges. Of note, Myanmar did not send a representative, due to “pressing domestic concerns and domestic engagements.”

Many reconvened in Singapore during the Shangri-La Dialogue, which involved defense officials from 22 Asia-Pacific nations (including Secretary Rumsfeld). Defense officials from Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia in particular pointed with great pride to some major steps toward greater actual defense cooperation in patrolling the Malacca Strait, including an “eye in the sky” program of increased surveillance and information sharing. The U.S. (among others) offered to provide assistance, particularly in the area of capacity building, while respecting the fact that primary responsibility rests with the sovereign states that sit astride the Malacca Strait.

During his speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue, Malaysia Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Najib Razak proposed the establishment of a regional relief center to coordinate regional responses to humanitarian disasters, an idea that seemed to be well-received even though it was not clear that it had been vetted with his ASEAN colleagues prior to his announcement. Najib called it a “preliminary” proposal advanced to “test reactions,” noting that it was up to ASEAN to “show the way,” perhaps by establishing standard operating procedures and identifying available units and “who is to do what” in future emergencies.

While all the talk about defense cooperation was encouraging, there has been little real defense cooperation or even coordination within ASEAN when it comes to responding to a neighbor’s call for help. ASEAN was conspicuously quiet, with only Malaysia sending

assistance to help restore order in Timor-Leste, where the democratic process is still struggling to take hold.

Freedom's path: the road not traveled

Finally, those anticipating some forward movement down “freedom’s path” in Myanmar were profoundly disappointed when the ruling junta, on May 27, extended Aung San Suu Kyi’s house arrest for another year. Many of Myanmar’s ASEAN colleagues, and especially Malaysia, had been outspoken in urging junta leaders to release Suu Kyi and the leadership’s willingness to allow UN special envoy Ibrahim Gambari to meet with her a week prior to the decision being made had raised hopes that Senior General Than Shwe would honor UN Secretary General Kofi Annan’s direct plea to “do the right thing” and release the Nobel Laureate.

It will be interesting to see if Myanmar’s decision will be directly criticized at the upcoming ARF ministerial meeting in Kuala Lumpur. Washington will also be looking for additional insights into the future direction of East Asia community building in general and the EAS in particular when the region’s foreign ministers meet. While all members of the Six-Party Talks are scheduled to participate at the July ARF meeting, the odds of separate side meetings appear low. Whether Secretary of State Rice will take advantage of the opportunity to speak separately with her DPRK counterpart remains to be seen.

Regional Chronology April-June 2006

April 2, 2006: Thai snap elections called by Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra are held.

April 3, 2006: PM Thaksin’s Thai Rak Thai party wins majority of votes cast but boycotts and public demonstrations raise questions about the election’s validity.

April 3, 2006: High-level Myanmar delegation visits Russia.

April 4, 2006: PM Thaksin announces resignation but will remain caretaker prime minister until one is elected.

April 4-19, 2006: Chinese Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan visits North Korea on the first stop on a five Asian nation tour – Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, and South Korea.

April 5, 2006: National Security Advisor Steve Hadley at a Strategic Asia Forum in Washington lays out “three basic insights” into the Bush administration’s strategy in East Asia.

April 5, 2006: State Department releases annual *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy* report.

April 5, 2006: Premier Wen Jiabao announces \$12 billion aid for South Pacific islands.

April 6, 2006: Sixth Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) exercise *Pacific Protector 06* takes place in northern Australia simulating air interception of WMD.

April 10-11, 2006: North East Asia Cooperation Dialogue held in Tokyo; senior Six-Party Talks negotiators participate in their private capacities, but senior U.S. and DPRK delegates do not meet and no progress toward resumption of formal talks occurs.

April 11, 2006: Japan's Foreign Ministry announces that DNA tests show that South Korean Kim Young-nam is likely to be the husband of abductee Yokota Megumi.

April 12, 2006: In rare public criticism, Russian Foreign Ministry pointedly tells Iran that it is on the wrong path, in response to the public statement by President Ahmadinejad that Iran has successfully enriched uranium for the first time.

April 14, 2006: Japanese Foreign Ministry releases 2006 *Diplomatic Blue Book*; cites China for lack of transparency about military buildup.

April 14, 2006: DPRK Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye-gwan says North Korea could use the standoff in the Six-Party Talks to bolster its military "deterrent force" and demands return of funds at Banco Delta Asia as a precondition for resumption of talks.

April 18, 2006: Department of State releases fact sheets calling for increased religious freedom, as well as greater political and civil rights in China.

April 18-21, 2006: PRC President Hu Jintao visits U.S.

April 19, 2006: Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev threatens to close the U.S. airbase at Manas by June 1 unless Washington agrees to new terms demanded by the Kyrgyz government; a new agreement is subsequently reached.

April 20, 2006: Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia signed a formal agreement to coordinate anti-piracy patrols along the Strait of Malacca.

April 21, 2006: Taipei requests transit stops in New York and Los Angeles during President Chen's trip to Latin America in early May.

April 23, 2006: China hosts sixth annual Boao Forum on Hainan Island.

April 21-24, 2006: The 18th inter-Korean ministerial meeting is held in Pyongyang.

April 23, 2006: Japan and U.S. strike a deal over cost sharing on relocating 8,000 U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guam, with Tokyo paying 59 percent, or \$6.09 billion, of the estimated \$10.27 billion total.

April 23-30, 2006: The Fourth Indonesia-U.S. Security Dialogue takes place in Washington, D.C. U.S. technical assistance for Malacca Strait patrols is discussed.

April 24, 2006: Taiwan holds *Hanguang 22* exercise; retired U.S. Adm. Blair observes.

April 24-25, 2006: China and U.S. co-sponsor APEC Anti-Corruption Workshop in Shanghai.

April 24-27, 2006: Russian Vice Premier and Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov visits Beijing, co-chairs Russian-Chinese Commission on Military-Technical Cooperation, and joins annual meeting of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) defense ministers.

April 26, 2006: *Yomiuri Shimbun* reports the U.S. will return four military facilities in Okinawa to Japan. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station, Naha Military Port, Makiminato Service Area in Urasoe, and Camp Kuwae will be returned by the end of fiscal 2013.

April 27, 2006: Chinese and Vietnamese navies start joint patrol in Beibu Gulf in the South China Sea, the first time the Chinese navy patrols jointly with a foreign counterpart.

April 27-28, 2006: PRC State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan makes a secret trip to Pyongyang and briefs Chairman Kim Jong-il on the results of Hu Jintao's summit with George Bush.

April 28, 2006: USTR releases *2006 Special 301 Report*, which emphasizes China's IPR violations and moves U.S. policy toward using WTO dispute settlement mechanisms in regards to China.

April 28, 2006: President George Bush meets with Yokota Sakie, mother of Yokota Megumi who was abducted by the North Koreans.

May 1, 2006: U.S. and Japan release joint statement confirming deal to realign U.S. Forces in Japan by 2014 after U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Meeting in Washington.

May 2, 2006: Taiwan President Chen summons AIT's Young to complain about transit arrangements after the U.S. reportedly offers only brief stop in Hawaii or Alaska.

May 3, 2006: U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) releases annual report in which China is listed as a "country of particular concern" due to restrictions, state control, and repression of religious communities.

May 4, 2006: President Chen opts not to transit the U.S. en route to Paraguay.

May 4, 2006: Finance ministers of Japan, South Korea, China, and ASEAN release a joint statement that they will double the liquidity support for countries within the group facing a foreign exchange crisis and promote research on a single Asian currency.

May 4, 2006: Vice President Cheney lambastes the Russian government in a widely publicized speech in the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius, accusing the Russian government – among other things – of using energy to blackmail its neighbors.

May 5, 2006: Indonesian President Yudhoyono offers to mediate between the U.S. and Iran regarding Iran’s nuclear program during President Ahmadinejad’s Jakarta visit.

May 7-9, 2006: Fifth Japan-China Vice Ministers’ Comprehensive Policy Dialogue takes place in Beijing.

May 7-10, 2006: President Roh visits Mongolia.

May 8, 2006: South Korea begins withdrawal of its troops from Iraq. Ban on U.S. citizens having any business relationship with North Korea-flagged vessels takes effect.

May 8, 2006: Thai constitutional court nullifies Thailand’s April parliamentary elections.

May 9, 2006: First ASEAN Defense Ministers’ Meeting is held in Kuala Lumpur.

May 9-16, 2006: Pacific Commander Adm. Fallon meets with top Chinese Defense and Foreign Ministry officials and tours military installations in China; extends invitation to observe U.S. military exercise near Guam.

May 10, 2006: Treasury Department releases semi-annual *Report on International Economic and Exchange Rate Policies* saying that China has been too slow to revalue the RMB, but doesn’t label China a “currency manipulator.”

May 10, 2006: President Chen transits Libya en route home: meets Gadhafi’s son.

May 10, 2006: During Congressional testimony, Deputy Secretary Zoellick warns that Taiwan independence means war.

May 10-12, 2006: In Seoul, Korea and India hold second round of Joint Task Force talks to conclude the Korea-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

May 11, 2006: President Chen overnights in Batam, Indonesia en route home.

May 11, 2006: President Bush meets with three prominent Chinese Christian activists and pledges to discuss religious freedom with Chinese leaders.

May 14, 2006: In Washington, Vietnam and the United States reach an agreement on the conditions for Hanoi’s accession to the WTO, which will occur later this year.

May 14-27, 2006: UN Secretary General Kofi Annan travels to South Korea, Japan, China, Vietnam, and Thailand.

May 15, 2006: Foreign ministers meet in Shanghai to prepare for the SCO summit scheduled for mid-June.

May 15-25, 2006: U.S., Thai, Singaporean, Indonesian, and Japanese military forces participate in exercise *Cobra Gold 2006* for Combined Command Post Exercise and multiple Combined Field Training Exercises.

May 16, 2006: Korea-ASEAN FTA is concluded and is to come into effect in July. Thailand opts out over concerns over agricultural issues.

May 17-20, 2006: ARF Senior Officials Meeting held in Karambunai, Malaysia.

May 18, 2006: President Bush renews sanctions against Myanmar for failing to take steps toward the restoration of democracy.

May 18, 2006: Japan, China, India, and the U.S. pledge capability development assistance to the littoral states for maritime security enhancements in the Malacca Strait at ARF Security Policy Conference.

May 18-19, 2006: Fourth meeting of the Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation Promotion Committee at the Office of Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation is held in Gaeseong.

May 20, 2006: Taiwan's first *National Security Report* released.

May 20, 2006: Vietnam, China, and the Philippines are to strengthen security cooperation in the Spratly Islands after an apparent pirate attack left four Chinese dead.

May 20, 2006: UN special envoy Ibrahim Gambari is allowed to meet Aung San Suu Kyi, raising hopes that she would soon be released from house arrest.

May 22, 2006: U.S. naval hospital ship *Mercy* docks in Manila to begin a four-week medical mission primarily in the southern Philippines, part of a five-month deployment to the Asia-Pacific.

May 22-25, 2006: Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill discusses U.S. views on East Asia at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy in Singapore.

May 23, 2006: Department of Defense releases *Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2006*.

May 23-24, 2006: The fifth Asian Cooperative Dialogue is held in Doha, Qatar. China, South Korea, and Japan meet on the sidelines to discuss bilateral issues.

May 24, 2006: North Korea notifies South Korea that it will cancel the planned May 25 test runs of the crossborder rail link.

May 24, 2006: U.S. and Malaysia inaugurate senior officials dialogue on economic and security issues. Asst. Secretary of State Chris Hill attends the meeting in Putrajaya.

May 24-26, 2006: Asst. Secretary Hill travels to China and South Korea over pending bilateral and Six-Party Talks issues.

May 25, 2006: U.S. and ROK conduct Security Policy Initiative meeting in Hawaii.

May 27, 2006: Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest extended another year by Myanmar ruling junta.

May 27-June 1, 2006: U.S., Japan, Canada, and Russia proceed with anti-smuggling exercise starting in Shanghai after China and South Korea drop out for fear of offending North Korea. South Korea participates in the second half of the exercise, where a mock search of a "suspect" ship is conducted for smuggled people and drugs in Busan.

May 28-June 2, 2006: Indian Defense Minister Mukherjee visits China and meets with FM Li Zhaoxing and DM Cao.

May 29, 2006: Chinese government offers \$2 million in aid to Indonesia to help victims of the Yogyakarta earthquake.

May 29, 2006: The 12th China-ASEAN Senior Officials' Consultation opens in Siem Reap, Cambodia, with an aim to deepen cooperation.

May 30, 2006: Japanese Cabinet approves plans for realignment of 8,000 U.S. Marines to Guam.

May 30, 2006: U.S. and Singapore navies launch the 12th annual *Cooperation Afloat and Readiness and Training (CARAT)* exercise with 11 ships, a submarine, and two aircraft.

May 30-June 6, 2006: DPRK FM Paek Nam-sun meets Chinese counterpart Li Zhaoxing in Beijing to discuss Six-Party Talks and also visits Guangzhou.

May 31, 2006: South Korea holds by-elections. The conservative Grand National Party (GNP) wins in most contests. The ruling Uri Party fails to claim a single seat and wins only one of 16 ballots for mayors and provincial governors.

May 31, 2006: Taiwan opposition parties KMT and People First Party initiate a recall motion against President Chen Shui-bian in the Legislative Yuan.

May 31, 2006: The U.S. and Vietnam sign a bilateral market access agreement required for Vietnam's bid to join the WTO.

June 1, 2006: Presidents Bush and Hu speak by phone. They discuss U.S.-China relations, North Korea, and the Iran nuclear issue.

June 1-3, 2006: Timor-Leste President Xanana Gusmao makes state visit to China, and meets President Hu.

June 2-4, 2006: Fifth IISS Shangri-La Dialogue held in Singapore.

June 4, 2006: U.S. move to have Myanmar (Burma) formally discussed at the UN Security Council for the first time is opposed by Russia, China, and Japan.

June 4, 2006: World Health Organization says Taiwan will be able to participate in all WHO-sponsored Asia Pacific technical meetings.

June 4-9, 2006: Vice President of the Philippines Noli de Castro visits China.

June 5, 2006: U.S. Pacific Commander Adm. William Fallon visits U.S. forces engaged in civic action programs in Mindanao. A few days earlier the U.S. hospital ship *Mercy* provided free medical services to local villagers in the area.

June 5, 2006: State Department's annual *Report on Human Trafficking* is released.

June 5-9, 2006: First round of Korea-U.S. FTA negotiations held in Washington, D.C.

June 7, 2006: FM Ban says that South Korea and the U.S. are "deeply concerned" about reports that North Korea may test fire a *Taepodong 2* missile.

June 8, 2006: U.S. and China hold the eighth annual round of Defense Consultative Talks (DCTs) in Beijing.

June 8, 2006: Taiwan President Chen receives AIT's Burghardt; reiterates remaining "four noes;" State Dept. welcomes Chen's statement as profoundly important.

June 9, 2006: The 10th ROK-ASEAN Dialogue held in Seoul.

June 11, 2006: U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Rush* becomes the first major Coast Guard vessel to visit China since World War II when it arrives at Qingdao. The visit helps further law enforcement cooperation between the U.S. and China.

June 12, 2006: U.S. Ambassador Alexander Vershbow is among 76 Seoul-based envoys who visit the Gaeseong Industrial Zone, with ROK FM Ban.

June 12-13, 2006: South Korea and Japan hold 5th round of talks on the demarcation of the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in Tokyo.

June 13, 2006: Jemaah Islamiyah spiritual leader Abu Bakar Bashir is released from a Jakarta jail after serving 26 months for criminal conspiracy relating to the 2002 Bali and 2003 Marriott bombings.

June 14, 2006: Taipei and Beijing announce expansion of direct cross-Strait flights to include special charter cargo flights, the regularization of charter passenger flights during designated holidays, medical emergencies, and for humanitarian purposes.

June 14, 2006: Kabaya Ryoichi, mayor of Yokosuka, says his city would accept the first U.S. nuclear-powered aircraft carrier stationed in Japan, saying he has no choice because there is no possibility that a conventional aircraft carrier will be sent.

June 15, 2006: Fifth annual summit of SCO Heads of State held in Shanghai. Iranian President Ahmadinejad attends as observer.

June 16, 2006: ASEAN Secretary General Ong Keng Yong says the emerging East Asian community will not exclude the U.S. even as China seeks a larger role in Southeast Asia.

June 16, 2006: U.S. and Russian officials agree on a seven-year extension of the Nunn-Lugar initiative. The program provides U.S. money and expertise to secure and destroy Soviet-era caches of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons.

June 16, 2006: Tokyo makes a request to Pyongyang to stop preparations to launch a *Taepodong 2* missile through the North Korean embassy in Beijing.

June 16-17, 2006: The second summit of Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) is held in Kazakhstan; Presidents Putin and Hu hold informal meeting during the CICA summit.

June 18, 2006: FM Aso says Tokyo will seek an immediate meeting of the United National Security Council if North Korea fires a missile and that consideration of sanctions is “inevitable.”

June 19-23, 2006: China sends a 10-member delegation to observe *Valiant Shield*, U.S. military exercises off the coast of Guam.

June 19-30, 2006: Fourteenth round of family reunions held at Mt. Geumgang, allowing two groups of 100 elderly persons each from North and South to spend three days meeting long-lost relatives.

June 20, 2006: Prime Minister Koizumi announces that Japan will withdraw ground troops from Iraq. The withdrawal will be coordinated with Britain and Australia. Japan’s ASDF will remain to transport goods and personnel to Baghdad for the U.S.-led coalition.

June 21, 2006: *Kyodo News* reports that the U.S. calls Japan’s decision to withdraw ground troops from Iraq and increase airlift support a “positive” example of progress in transferring the security role to the Iraqi people. National Security Advisor Hadley says Japan is staying in the mission and actually expanding its air role.

June 21, 2006: Japan agrees to resume buying U.S. beef after sending inspectors to the U.S. to monitor meat-packing facilities.

June 21, 2006: Former ROK President Kim Dae-jung postpones planned visit to North Korea.

June 22, 2006: For the first time, the Japanese *Aegis*-equipped destroyer *Kirishima* takes part in a U.S. missile defense test, performing long-range surveillance and tracking exercises with the U.S. destroyer *Shiloh*.

June 22, 2006: In a *Washington Post* editorial, former Clinton defense officials William Perry and Ashton Carter argue for a preemptive strike against North Korea's *Taepodong* missile while it is still on the launch pad; the White House quickly rules out this option.

June 23, 2006: FM Aso and Ambassador Schieffer sign documents to strengthen cooperation on ballistic missile defense development.

June 23, 2006: PSI meeting is held in Warsaw, Poland to review the past three years, look at emerging problems and their solutions, and discuss PSI's future.

June 27, 2006: Recall of President Chen does not pass the Taiwan Legislative Yuan.

June 27-28, 2006: ROK FM Ban visits Beijing to meet with counterpart FM Li. They agree on a "concrete and persuasive proposal" to get North Korea to return to the Six-Party Talks as a precursor to bilateral talks between North Korea and the U.S.

June 27-29, 2006: Australian PM John Howard meets Chinese PM Wen in Shenzhen to deepen cooperation between the two countries in the energy sector.

June 28, 2006: House Foreign Relations Committee, by 37-5 majority, approves United States and India Cooperation Promotion Act of 2006 that authorizes the president to exempt the U.S.-India nuclear cooperative agreement from statutory prohibitions, clearing the way for the transfer of civilian nuclear technology, including nuclear reactors and fuel, to India.

June 28, 2006: The amphibious command and control ship *USS Blue Ridge* docks in Shanghai for exchanges with the PLA Navy.

June 28, 2006: PRC Premier Wen states that "China is paying close attention to news that North Korea is possibly planning a missile-launch . . . I hope all parties will continue their efforts to maintain the stability of the Korean Peninsula."

June 28, 2006: MSDF destroyer *Kirishima* returns to Japan, cutting short participation in U.S.-led naval exercises off Hawaii. Some attribute the return to the need to monitor a possible North Korean missile launch.

June 28-30, 2006: Prime Minister Koizumi makes final visit to the U.S. as prime minister. A White House dinner, Oval Office visit, and Graceland tour are planned.

June 29, 2006: PM Koizumi and President Bush issue joint statement declaring a new alliance for the 21st century based on “common values and interests.” Bush agrees to step up cooperation on reforming the UN to realize Japan’s bid for a permanent UNSC seat.

June 29, 2006: ROK Vice Finance Minister Bahk Byong-won tells a forum in Seoul that the South will intensify technical assistance and training, especially in market economics and management, so as to expedite sustainable economic growth in the North.

