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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Nuclear Program

The Associated Press (Audra Ang, "DISABLING OF NKOREA REACTOR STARTS SOON ", Beijing, 2007/11/01) reported that a top US official said that work on disabling the DPRK's main nuclear complex will probably begin this week, a step that would move the country one step closer to disarmament. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill said talks went well with his DPRK counterpart on the technical details of disabling a reactor that produces plutonium for bombs, as well as other facilities at Yongbyon nuclear complex. DPRK negotiator Kim Kye Gwan said no problems cropped up during talks with Hill, Japan's Kyodo News agency reported. "At this stage, there are no major differences in opinion," Kim said.

Agence France-Press (Dan Martin , "US TEAM IN NORTH KOREA TO BEGIN DISABLING NUCLEAR FACILITIES", Beijing, 2007/11/01) reported that a team of US nuclear inspectors arrived in the DPRK on Thursday. Sung Kim, director of the State Department's Korean affairs office, told reporters before leaving Beijing, "We would like to start as soon as possible. I think as soon as we are set up in Yongbyon we will begin. Hopefully early next week."

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2. DPRK Energy Working Group Meeting

Chosun Ilbo ("PYONGYANG TO GET 50,000 TONS OF HEAVY OIL A MONTH", 2007/11/01) reported that the third meeting of a working group on energy and economic aid to the DPRK under the six-party framework was held at Panmunjom. The meeting was chaired by Lim Sung-nam, the deputy chief of the ROK delegation to the six-party talks. Lim said, "We reached an agreement that the promised energy assistance equivalent to 950,000 tons of heavy fuel oil" under the Feb. 13 denuclearization deal "will be provided in the form of 450,000 tons of heavy oil and other assistance equivalent to 500,000 tons of heavy oil." "We agreed to supply 50,000 tons of heavy fuel oil on a regular basis every month. Meanwhile, Tokyo reportedly refused in Tuesday's meeting to join in providing any heavy oil assistance until Pyongyang-Tokyo relations are normalized.

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3. DPRK Foreign Relations

Joongang Ilbo (Brian Lee, "SIGNALS COMING FROM THE MEDIA IN NORTH KOREA", 2007/11/01) reported that the DPRK is increasingly sending out signals through its state media indicating a

desire to interact more with the outside world. The DPRK's communist party newspaper Rodong Sinmun said in an editorial earlier this week that it is no longer a time for production and construction to be achieved through the workers' bare hands alone. "We are stressing self-sufficiency, but that does not mean we are disregarding international economic relations while striving to build our economy," the newspaper said. The Chosun Sinbo, a pro-Pyongyang newspaper in Japan widely believed to be representing the DPRK's views, also said this week that progress in the six-party talks reflected Pyongyang's political will to improve ties with neighboring countries

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4. Korean War Peace Treaty

Agence France-Presse ("GENERAL ASSEMBLY ENDORSES INTER-KOREAN PEACE PROCESS", United Nations, 2007/11/01) reported that the UN General Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution endorsing efforts by Seoul and Pyongyang to advance the process of inter-Korean dialogue and reunification. The resolution welcomed and backed the October 2-4 summit between the DPRK and ROK leaders. The 192-member assembly called on Seoul and Pyongyang to implement the summit declaration "fully and in good faith, thereby consolidating peace on the Korean peninsula and laying a solid foundation for peaceful reunification." The resolution invites UN member states to continue to assist "the process of inter-Korean dialogue, reconciliation and reunification so that it may contribute to peace and security not only on the Korean peninsula but also in northeast Asia and the world as a whole."

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5. Inter-Korean Relations

Yonhap ("N. KOREAN HOSTILITY TOWARD S. KOREA EASING AFTER SUMMIT: AID GROUP ", Seoul, 2007/11/01) reported that the number of DPRK citizens who feel hostility toward the ROK has dropped noticeably since the inter-Korean summit held earlier this month, an aid group said. Good Friends said in its latest newsletter that people in the DPRK are expressing less animosity toward the ROK than after the first summit in June 2000. It said that while ordinary DPRK do not have detailed information about the summit, rumors are circulating that the ROK provided aid to help flood victims. Good Friends also said that compared to the past, people can say that ROK citizens live well without retaliation from authorities, although party and government officials are more reserved about expressing such views.

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6. DPRK Flood Aid

Yonhap (Sam Kim, "N. KOREA ALLOWS AID GROUP TO REACH FLOOD VICTIMS DIRECTLY: RFA", Seoul, 2007/11/01) reported that the DPRK has allowed an international relief group to bring supplies directly to the DPRK's southeastern region hit hard by recent floods, Radio Free Asia (RFA) has reported. The US-funded broadcasting station cited Tom Henderson of England-based civic group, Shelter Box, Tuesday as saying that DPRK authorities made the rare decision, allowing aid officials to deliver food and other supplies to flood victims in the region southeast of capital Pyongyang.

Yonhap (Yoo Cheong-mo, "ROH ASKS OVERSEAS KOREAN TRADERS TO INVEST IN NORTH KOREA ", Seoul, 2007/11/01) reported that President Roh Moo-hyun urged overseas ROK traders to play a leading role in accelerating inter-Korean economic cooperation and constructing an inter-Korean economic community. At the opening ceremony of the 6th annual World Korean Business Convention at BEXCO in Busan, Roh said the creation of an inter-Korean economic community would help open a "big market" in Northeast Asia, providing Korean entrepreneurs at home and abroad with opportunities for a fresh rebound. "Private enterprises have to assume the leading role in expanding economic cooperation between the two Koreas. In accordance with corporate demands, the (South Korean) government will help expand infrastructures in North Korea. That is an effective order," said Roh.

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7. ROK-US relations

Chosun Ilbo (Lee Ha-won, "American Think Tanks Ponder U.S.-Korea Alliance", Washington, 2007/11/01 20:00:00 GMT+0) reported that with the approach of the December presidential election in ROK, studies of the ROK-US alliance have emerged as a key research theme for an advisory group for the US Defense Department and other US think tanks. US foreign-affairs think tanks are conducting intensive research on the ROK-US alliance, apparently reflecting a sense of serious tensions in the bilateral relationship, according to experts participating in the projects. They stress the need for a thorough review of the alliance.

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8. ROK on Iraq Role

Chosun Ilbo ("KOREAN TROOPS IN IRAQ TO BE CUT BY 590 MEN", 2007/11/01) reported that the ROK troops stationed in Irbil, northern Iraq will be reduced by some 590 by year's end. Out of the total number of about 1,250 troops, some 250 will be pulled out by the end of November and 340 more by the end of December. An official with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on Tuesday said the Zaytun Unit will be reduced to about 650 by the end of the year according to a plan to drastically reduce the troops and extend their mandate.

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9. Japan SDF Indian Ocean Mission

Associated Press (Kozo Mizoguchi, "JAPAN HALTS INDIAN OCEAN MISSION", Tokyo, 2007/11/01) reported that Japan's defense minister ordered ships supporting U.S.-led forces in Afghanistan to return home Thursday after opposition lawmakers refused to support an extension of the mission. Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda stated, "In order to fulfill our responsibility for international efforts toward eradicating terrorism, we do need to continue our refueling mission. The government will do all it can to pass the special bill for the refueling mission so we can restart our mission as soon as possible."

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10. US on Japan SDF Indian Ocean Mission

The Asahi Shimbun (Toshiya Umehara, "PENTAGON: END OF MISSION WON'T HURT TIES WITH U.S", Washington, 2007/11/01) reported that Japan's ties with the US would not suffer if Tokyo is unable to pass new legislation to allow the Maritime Self-Defense Force to continue its refueling mission in the Indian Ocean, a Pentagon source said. "This (the expiration of the law) isn't really something that has an effect one way or the other on the (decades-old bilateral) alliance," said the Defense Department source in a briefing of Japanese reporters. "This is fundamentally about the debate within Japan about what should Japan's role and mission be." Pentagon Press Secretary Geoff Morrell at a news briefing the same day touched on the suspension of Japan's refueling activities, saying he did not think it would have an "operational impact."

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11. US-PRC Relations

Agence France-Presse ("GATES TO VISIT CHINA", Washington, 2007/11/01) reported that US Defense Secretary Robert Gates is traveling next week to the PRC, ROK, and Japan for security talks, a Pentagon spokesman said Wednesday. It would be Gates's first trip to northeast Asia since becoming secretary of defense in December. "He's going there to have meetings, and that is the purpose of the visit," said Geoff Morrell, the Pentagon press secretary. Morrell provided no details on the trip beyond the fact that the secretary will visit the PRC, ROK, and Japan.

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12. PRC Space Program

The Associated Press ("CHINA PLANS TO BUILD NEW SPACE ROCKETS ", Beijing, 2007/11/01) reported that the PRC will build a new family of rockets, state media said Wednesday, a move that would boost the country's capabilities to put satellites and space stations in space. The announcement follows the PRC's successful launch a week ago of its first lunar probe — a leap forward in the Asian space race. The new Long March 5 rockets, which can be used to carry communication satellites and lunar probes, will be able to hold greater weight than the current batch. They signal the PRC's ambitions to have a greater presence in space in the next 30 to 50 years and desire to compete in the global market to launch commercial satellites, said the China Daily.

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II. CanKor

13. Report #296

CanKor ("FOCUS: DPRK-Vietnamese Relations", 2007/11/01) Just in case you missed it, DPRK leader Kim Jong Il has added the words Doi Moi to his vocabulary. This is the name of Vietnam's reform

policy, adopted in 1986, establishing a market economy including liberalization of trade and finance with foreign countries, decentralization of state economic management, and reliance on the private sector as an engine of economic growth. Kim is said to have indicated that Doi Moi could be relevant to the DPRK's own economic future. The secretary-general of Vietnam's Communist Party and the Vietnamese foreign minister are visiting Pyongyang, while the prime ministers of the DPRK and Vietnam are in Hanoi, signing a memorandum of understanding to boost technological, scientific, agricultural and cultural exchanges. Preparations are under way for a follow-up visit to Vietnam by Kim Jong Il himself.

CanKor ("OPINION: KIM JONG IL CONFRONTS BUSH -- AND WINS", 2007/11/01) It is likely that Pyongyang hopes to play the US off against China, much as it did Moscow and Beijing during the cold war. There is no way to know if this new thinking has had an impact on Bush, but it is a logical US strategy for the region in the 21st-century. Bizarre events may well place Bush and evildoer Kim Jong Il side by side as peacemakers. If so, all well and good, and better late than never.

CanKor ("READER'S COMMENTS", 2007/11/01) "Your work is absolutely useful and essential in terms of getting a more balanced account of what is going on in and around the DPRK. More than once, other newsdigests have shown a specific bias that CanKor has and hopefully will counter with its up to date analysis." Dr. Sebastian Harnisch, Department of Political Science, University of Trier

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