NAPSNet Daily Report 13 April, 2010

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report 13 April, 2010", NAPSNet Daily Report, April 13, 2010, https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-13-april-2010/

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Preceding NAPSNet Report

MARKTWO

I. NAPSNet

1. ROK on US-DPRK Talks

Dong A Ilbo ("US ASKED TO DELAY TALKS WITH N. KOREA", 2010/04/12) reported that the ROK has asked the U.S. not to hold talks with the DPRK before the cause of the sinking of the ROK naval vessel Cheonan is determined. A ROK official yesterday said, “We’ve asked U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Kurt Campbell to postpone North Korea-U.S. talks for a while. If relations between North Korea and the U.S. improve at a time when inter-Korean relations worsen due to unexpected events such as the sinking of the Cheonan, Seoul could feel isolated. We have informed the U.S. government of such worries.” “The U.S. has accepted our request and deferred its issuance of an entry visa for a key North Korean figure who had planned to visit the U.S.”

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2. ROK, US on DPRK Nuclear Program

JoongAng Daily ("SEOUL: U.S., SOUTH UNITED ON NORTH’S NUKE STATUS", 2010/04/13) reported that the ROK yesterday insisted that neither Seoul nor Washington recognizes the DPRK as a nuclear state, despite U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s recent remarks that the DPRK possesses nuclear weapons. In a press briefing yesterday, Kim Young-sun, spokesman for the Foreign Ministry in Seoul, said the ROK and the United States had no difference of opinion regarding the DPRK’s status. “The international community, including South Korea and the United States, is firm in its stance that North Korea can’t attain the status of a nuclear weapons state,” Kim said. “I believe Secretary Clinton wanted to emphasize the importance of the international efforts to denuclearize North Korea.”

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3. DPRK on US Nuclear Posture

Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA DENOUNCES NEW OBAMA NUCLEAR STRATEGY", 2010/04/12) reported that the DPRK denounced President Barack Obama's new nuclear stance as "hostile" and vowed to continue expanding its atomic arsenal as the country's parliament held an annual session focused on revitalizing the economy. The DPRK accused the Obama government of being no better than the Bush administration, "hell-bent on posing a nuclear threat" to the DPRK, and said it would not give up its atomic weapons. "As long as the U.S. nuclear threat persists, the DPRK will increase and update various type nuclear weapons as its deterrent in such a manner as it deems necessary in the days ahead," the official Korean Central News Agency quoted an unidentified Foreign Ministry spokesman as saying.

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4. DPRK Economy

Institute for Far Eastern Studies ("DPRK AUTHORITIES SLASH ALL PRICES BY 99 PERCENT", 2010/04/12) reported that as inflation and food worries continue to grow in the DPRK, social unrest is palpable. According to the group 'Good Friends', DPRK officials slashed prices on all goods to 1/100th of their going rate in an effort to ease the public. Considering the fact that the DPRK revalued its currency by the same ratio on November 30, it appears that Pyongyang is effectively acknowledging the reform's failure. The Good Friends newsletter reports that the Korean Workers' Party cabinet had handed down an order to reduce the price of all goods by a factor of 100:1, while the people of the DPRK were told during local meetings that currency was revalued at 100 to 1, but not in order to reduce the sale of goods by 100 to 1, as well. Now, People's Committees and security forces in each city and town are enforcing the '100 to 1 Price Plan' while the central Party's 100:1 commerce committee has distributed a class syllabus in support of the price modifications, which was lectured on throughout the country from March 16-18.

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5. DPRK Internal Situation

Yonhap News ("LEE SAYS N. KOREA APPEARS TO BE CHANGING BEHAVIOR", 2010/04/12) reported that the DPRK appears ready to acknowledge and explain its failed currency reform, a possible sign that the communist regime is changing its behavior, ROK President Lee Myung-bak said. "There's no denying that the North Korean regime and its leadership are facing a transformative moment right now," Lee said in an interview. He said the DPRK's response to the recent currency revaluation may be an example. "We have received a lot of reports from North Korea that for the first time the North Korean leadership is now intent on actually explaining their reason for the failure to the North Korean population -- something that we haven't seen before is them admitting that they made mistakes," he said. "This is a small yet very significant change we are detecting within North Korea," Lee said.

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6. DPRK Human Rights

Yonhap ("SEOUL'S RIGHTS WATCHDOG BACKS N. KOREA HUMAN RIGHTS BILL", 2010/04/12) reported that the National Human Rights Commission of Korea (NHRCK) said Monday it has decided to urge the National Assembly to speed up its passage of a long-stalled bill aimed at improving human rights conditions in the DPRK. On Feb. 11, the Assembly's foreign affairs committee approved the North Korea Human Rights bill submitted by the ruling Grand National Party, which calls for an establishment of a government body dedicated to the issue of DPRK human rights and the provision of support for nongovernmental organizations working to improve the situation.

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7. Inter-Korean Economic Relations

Yonhap News ("HEAD OF HYUNDAI HOPES TO RESUME MOUNTAIN TOURS DESPITE NORTH'S THREAT", 2010/04/12) reported that the chief of the ROK's Hyundai business conglomerate, which runs joint business projects with the DPRK, said Monday she hopes to resume tours to their troubled joint mountain resort, despite threats by the DPRK to scrap the tourism project. "As a business for reconciliation between the South and the North, the Mount Kumgang tours must go on," Hyun told group employees. "If there is progress in talks between the governments (of the South and the North), I'm confident that the blocked road will open," Hyun said.

Yonhap News ("S. KOREA UNFAZED BY N. KOREAN PRESSURE OVER TOURISM", 2010/04/12) reported that the ROK is refusing to budge despite DPRK pressure over a troubled joint tourism program, denouncing Pyongyang's decision to freeze ROK assets at a mountain resort and vowing to hold the DPRK responsible for any damage to those properties. "The government, as it has already stated, remains convinced that the North's unilateral actions must immediately be retracted as they will violate the North's contracts with (South Korean) businesses, as well as international regulations," Chun Hae-sung, spokesman for Seoul's unification ministry, told a press briefing.

Agence France-Presse (Lim Chang-Won, "N.KOREA SHUTS S.KOREAN ASSETS AT RESORT, EXPELS STAFF", Seoul, 2010/04/13) reported that the DPRK on Tuesday began expelling staff and sealing ROK-owned buildings at Mt. Kumgang, officials said. The DPRK pasted "keep-out" stickers across the keyholes of five Seoul -owned buildings and told four Korean-Chinese custodians working there to leave within 24 hours, Unification Ministry spokeswoman Lee Jong-Joo told AFP. "As expected, North Korea is taking action step by step despite our warnings that such unilateral measures were seriously hurting relations. We urge North Korea to immediately retract its decision," Lee said. The ROK will "strongly" deal with the move, she said, without elaborating.

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8. Inter-Korea Relations

JoongAng Daily ("NORTH UNION BOSSES' VISIT UNDETERRED", 2010/04/12) reported that DPRK labor union bosses will visit Seoul this month for a joint DPRK-ROK celebration of Labor Day, but the ROK government is against the idea. Up to 100 senior-level personnel from the DPRK's umbrella labor union, the General Federation of Trade Unions of Korea (GFTUK), are to visit Seoul from April

30 to May 2 for the festivities with the ROK's two major umbrella labor unions, the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) and the Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU), according to the ROK unions. In a joint release yesterday, the unions of the ROK and DPRK stated, "We object to any action which implants distrust and causes disputes between people of the same race."

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9. ROK-US Military Relations

Yonhap News ("LEE COMMEMORATES SACRIFICE BY AMERICAN SOLDIERS DURING KOREAN WAR", 2010/04/12) reported that ROK President Lee Myung-bak met Monday with U.S. veterans of the Korean War (1950-1953), who formed part of the 1.79 million-strong American force sent to fight alongside the ROK against invading DPRK forces during the 1950-1953 conflict. "President Lee said that the sacrifice and dedication of the soldiers became a stepping stone for South Korea's development today and the South Korea-U.S. alliance," Lee's spokeswoman Kim Eun-hye told reporters. Seoul-Washington ties will further develop as a "comprehensive and strategic" alliance, the president was quoted as saying.

Yonhap News ("SHARP SAYS U.S. FIGHTING CAPABILITY WILL INCREASE AFTER OPCON TRANSFER", 2010/04/12) reported that the war fighting capability of U.S. forces in the ROK will be strengthened, not weakened, following the scheduled transfer of wartime operational control of ROK troops from Washington to Seoul, the chief of U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) said Monday. The ROK will retake wartime operational control or OPCON of its troops in April 2012, a move that conservative critics fear could undermine the combined combat capabilities of ROK and U.S. troops stationed here.

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10. ROK Naval Ship Sinking

Yonhap News ("CHEONAN STERN BREAKS SURFACE AFTER 17 DAYS", 2010/04/12) reported that the military managed to hoist a part of the sunken Cheonan's stern above the waterline yesterday, and discovered several pieces missing, which suggests a strong blast from the outside sunk the ship. A defense official said that two of four ship-to-ship harpoon missiles installed in the stern appear to be missing. Also, a large stovepipe disappeared. The official, who asked not to be named, said that the military presumed a strong blast from the outside destroyed some of the stern's structure.

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11. ROK Anti-Piracy

Yonhap News ("PIRATES YET TO MAKE RANSOM DEMAND OVER S. KOREAN TANKER", 2010/04/12) reported that Somali pirates have made no specific ransom demand yet over a hijacked ROK supertanker, though they said they hoped to strike a deal at an early date, the ship's owner said Monday. Pirates told the firm's head in negotiations by phone that the tanker's 24 crew members were safe, but did not say how much money they want for the release of the ship and the crew, an official at Samho Shipping Co. said.

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12. ROK Space Program

Yonhap News ("GOV'T CONDUCTS COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION FOR SPACE ROCKET LAUNCH", 2010/04/12) reported that the ROK has started comprehensive examinations of all launch systems ahead of the nation's second attempt to send a domestically assembled satellite-carrying rocket into orbit, the government said Monday. The date for the actual launch will be announced next Monday, the ministry added. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology said checkups of the first and second stage rockets and the scientific satellite are being conducted, along with the launch pad, mission control and various tracking and communications systems.

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13. USFJ Base Relocation

Stars and Stripes ("JAPANESE LAWMAKERS TOUR OKINAWA, TALK FUTENMA ", 2010/04/12) reported that members of Japan’s Lower House made a one-day tour of Okinawa on Monday to discuss the Futenma relocation controversy with local officials. Eleven members of the Special Committee on Okinawa and the Northern Territories toured Camp Schwab and observed Marine Corps Air Station Futenma from a hill overlooking the sprawling base that has been slated for closure since 1996. “We are here to learn more about the situation surrounding the air station and hear voices of residents,” said Koichi Yamamoto of the Liberal Democratic Party, who chairs the committee. Eying Futenma from Kakazu Heights, Ginowan Mayor Yoichi Iha told the visiting Diet members that city residents constantly suffer from noise from the air station and there have been numerous aircraft accidents over the years.

Kyodo News ("SDP LAWMAKER SAYS RELOCATING FUTEMMA TO TINIAN IS POSSIBLE ", 2010/04/12) reported that the Social Democratic Party's Diet affairs chief said Monday he is convinced that a U.S. Marine base in Okinawa Prefecture could be relocated to Tinian, an island in the western Pacific to which the SDP has advocated moving the base instead of elsewhere in the prefecture. Kantoku Teruya, who visited the island over the past weekend with Zenshin Takamine, chairman of the Okinawa prefectural assembly, told reporters that during their meeting, Tinian Mayor Ramon Dela Cruz expressed willingness to accept the Futemma Air Station and the transfer of Marines deployed in Okinawa. Teruya, a House of Representatives lawmaker representing a constituency in Okinawa, said the Tinian mayor appeared to hope for the benefits the Marine transfer could bring to the local economy, including jobs and infrastructure development.

Mainichi ("CONFUSION SURFACES OVER PLAN TO RELOCATE FUTENMA BASE TO TOKUNOSHIMA ISLAND", 2010/04/12) reported that the Japanese government is considering Tokunoshima Island in Kagoshima Prefecture as a prime candidate for the relocation site of U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in Okinawa Prefecture, it has emerged. Since last year, the Prime Minister's Office has repeatedly dispatched secret emissaries to approach local leaders about the possibility. Of the three towns on Tokunoshima Island, Amagi is the only one with an airport. Former town council chair Hidetada Maeda, who heads a group of local leaders in favor of the Futenma relocation to Tokunoshima said, "If the government meets six criteria, we'll take steps to bring the air base here".

Agence France-Presse (Shaun Tandon, "JAPAN PM HOPES TO END US BASE ROW SOON", Washington, 2010/04/13) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama has promised to resolve a row soon on a US military base. Hatoyama had no formal meeting scheduled during the nuclear summit with US President Barack Obama, who met a slew of leaders of smaller countries. Hatoyama said he spoke with Obama informally at a dinner Monday about the relocation of the Futenma air base . "I told him we will reach a conclusion by the end of May," Hatoyama later told reporters, repeating his earlier time-frame. "I said that it is necessary to reduce the burden on Okinawa for the sake of the development of the Japan -US alliance," he said.

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14. Japan Politics

Agence France Presse ("SUPPORT FOR JAPAN PM SINKS BELOW 30%", 2010/04/12) reported that public support for Japan's Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama has sunk below 30 percent, in part because of a simmering row with Washington over a US base, according to opinion polls released Monday. One poll found that half of the voters surveyed said Hatoyama should resign if he fails to hammer out a solution to the dispute over where the controversial base on the island of Okinawa should be relocated.

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15. Japan Whaling Issue

Agence France Presse ("JAPAN WHALERS BLAME SEA SHEPHERD HARASSMENT", 2010/04/12) reported that the last ship of Japan's Antarctic whaling fleet sailed home Monday with the lowest catch in years, a shortfall whalers blamed on high-seas clashes with the militant environmental group Sea Shepherd. The fleet's catch of 507 whales was down sharply on last year's cull of 680 and below the target of about 850, said Japan's Fisheries Agency, which blamed a total of 31 days of harassment by the Sea Shepherd group.

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16. Sino-Japanese Relations

Associated Press (Jay Alabaster, "JAPAN SAYS CHINA SUBS, WARSHIPS CAME NEAR OKINAWA", Tokyo, 2010/04/13) reported that Japanese Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa said said Tuesday that Tokyo is investigating an incident in which two PRC submarines and several warships were spotted in international waters off Okinawa. "We are now conducting a detailed analysis, and will decide on our response after a thorough investigation, including whether there was any intent toward this country or not," Kitazawa said.

Kyodo ("JAPAN, CHINA TO CONSTITUTE CORE OF E. ASIAN COMMUNITY: HATOYAMA ", Washington, 2010/04/12) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama told PRC President Hu Jintao on Monday that the two nations will constitute the core of his envisioned East Asian community. Hatoyama also urged the PRC to begin negotiations as early as possible to break the deadlock over a gas exploration project in the East China Sea.

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17. Japan, PRC on Climate Change

Kyodo News ("JAPAN, CHINA DIFFER ON HOW TO TREAT COPENHAGEN PACT IN FUTURE TALKS ", 2010/04/12) reported that Japan and the PRC remained apart Monday on how to treat a major climate accord brokered by global leaders during the last U.N. climate conference in December, especially over whether the accord should serve as a basis for a new global framework to combat climate change beyond 2012, a Japanese official said. Despite the difference in their views, Environment Minister Sakihito Ozawa and Xie Zhenhua, vice chairman of China's National Development and Reform Commission, agreed that Tokyo and Beijing should deepen partnership among policymakers and working-level officials to jointly curb greenhouse gas emissions through such means as technology transfer.

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18. PRC on Iran Nuclear Program

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA: SANCTIONS 'CANNOT SOLVE' IRAN NUCLEAR ISSUE", Beijing, 2010/04/13) reported that the PRC said Tuesday that sanctions were not the answer to the stand-off over Iran 's nuclear program. PRC Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Jiang Yu also said the PRC backs a "dual-track strategy" -- continued dialogue with Tehran while considering the possibility of sanctions if that fails to halt sensitive nuclear work. "China always believes that dialogue and negotiation are the best way out for the issue. Pressure and sanctions cannot fundamentally solve it," Jiang told reporters. But she added: "The actions of the Security Council should help turn around the situation and properly solve the issue through dialogue and negotiation."

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19. Sino-US Trade Relations

Agence France Presse (Marianne Barriaux , "CHINA SAYS TRADE DEFICIT PROVES YUAN NOT TO BLAME", 2010/04/12) reported that the PRC said its first trade deficit in six years proved the nation's exchange rate did not play a decisive role in global economic imbalances amid pressure to allow the yuan to appreciate. Customs authorities announced on Saturday that the nation had posted its first trade deficit in six years in March, at 7.2 billion dollars. "This again shows that in an era of economic globalisation, the deciding factor for balanced trade is not the exchange rate, but other factors such as the relationship of supply and demand in the market." Yao Jian, spokesman for the ministry, said in a statement.

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20. PRC Civil Unrest

Agence France Presse ("NOISY PROTESTERS STAGE ANTI-CHINA DEMO AT NUCLEAR SUMMIT", 2010/04/12) reported that scores of chanting Tibetans and silently meditating Falun Gong practitioners staged a peaceful protest in Washington Monday to warn world leaders gathered here

for a nuclear weapons summit not to take Beijing's pledges at face value. "World leaders should be careful of what Hu Jintao says. There are a lot of things about him that we, and world leaders, don't see," Tibetan protester Migmar Wanggi said. Washington police officers and soldiers in fatigues snapped to attention as the more than 100 Tibetans gathered in Samuel Gompers Square, a stone's throw from the Washington Convention Center where President Barack Obama is hosting 47 heads of state, including the PRC's Hu. "China will never admit to having nuclear weapons on the Tibetan plateau, but we suspect they do, and US intelligence reports have said the Chinese have used Tibet as a dumping ground for nuclear waste," one of the activists, Wangchuk Shakabpa of the US Tibet Committee, told AFP.

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II. PRC Report

21. PRC Civil Society

People's Daily ("SOCIAL WORK AND VOLUNTARY SERVICE FORUM HELD", 2010/04/12) reported that the Social Work and Voluntary Service Forum, which was sponsored by China Social Workers Association and other two NGOs, was held in Beijing on April 10th. The theme of the Forum was to discuss development strategies for social work under the PRC "situation" and exchange experiences among NGOs.

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22. PRC Environment

China Business Times ("BOAO FORUM FOR ASIA (BFA) APPEALS FOR GREEN RECOVERY", 2010/04/12) reported that The Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) Annual Conference 2010 was officially opened last Saturday in south PRC's Hainan Province, with a focus on Asia's sustainable recovery from the economic downturn. Some 2,000 political and business heavyweights and experts from Asia gathered in the island resort for the conference.

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