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I. United States

1. DPRK Nuclear Situation

The Agence France-Presse ("NORTH KOREA RATCHETS UP TENSION, ACCUSES WASHINGTON OF PIRACY," 12/13/02) and Washington Post (Doug Struck, "North Korea Says It Will Renew Work at Reactors," Tokyo, 12/13/02) reported that the DPRK brushed aside international warnings and forged ahead with a plan to revive a frozen nuclear program while accusing the US of piracy over the seizure of a missile shipment. Ratcheting up tensions a notch, the DPRK told inspectors from the international nuclear watchdog to remove cameras and seals that have kept its plutonium producing nuclear facilities mothballed for eight years. The demand in a letter to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) served to underline the DPRK's determination to abandon an arms pact that has helped guarantee security in the region since 1994. The move was seen in the ROK as a desperate bid from a bankrupt nation in the grip of a serious energy and food crisis to bring the US to the negotiating table. But the US branded the move "regrettable" and warned that the DPRK's gambit would fail. The US is clearly not going to play ball, said an expert at the Unification Ministry which handles DPRK affairs here. "Basically, North Korea wants to renegotiate its whole relationship with Washington and is using the nuclear issue to force the United States to engage. Washington

won't budge on that," he said. "What is certain is that this crisis is not going to end any time soon."

The New York Times (Howard W. French and David E. Sanger, "NORTH KOREA TO REACTIVATE AN IDLED NUCLEAR REACTOR," Tokyo, 12/13/02) and the Agence France-Presse ("NKOREA ASKS IAEA TO REMOVE SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS AT NUCLEAR PLANTS," 12/13/02) reported that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has said it received a request from the DPRK to remove seals and monitoring cameras from all its nuclear facilities. In a letter to the Vienna-based UN nuclear watchdog, the DPRK also informed the IAEA of its decision to reactivate nuclear facilities frozen under a 1994 agreement with the US, according to a statement issued from Vienna late Thursday. The letter from Ri Je Son, director general of North Korea's general department of the atomic energy, said the DPRK would "resume operations of these facilities for power generation," the IAEA statement said. "The DPRK's (North Korea's) letter requests that the IAEA remove seals and monitoring cameras on all of its nuclear facilities," the IAEA said. In response, IAEA Director General Mohammed ElBaradei said the DPRK should "act with restraint in this tense situation and not to take any unilateral action" that might further complicate the IAEA's job for nuclear safeguards. He urged the DPRK to keep the IAEA's surveillance system intact if it goes ahead with a decision to restart a suspended nuclear program.

2. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Situation

The Agence France-Presse ("PESSIMISM GRIPS SEOUL AS NUCLEAR CRISIS DEEPENS," 12/13/02) reported that with less than a week to go before presidential elections, the ROK watched with growing pessimism a deepening confrontation over the DPRK's nuclear program. ROK analysts say there is nothing the ROK can do but watch and wait to see who would blink first, the DPRK or the US. "South Korea is in a very difficult position. It has little room to maneuver as a mediator," said Lee Jong-Seok of the private Sejong Institute here. Lee said that in the worst case scenario the US, which is currently dealing with Iraq, might consider a military strike on the DPRK. "The best option is that the North comes clean about its nuclear program and the United States resumes oil shipment while seeking a peaceful solution," he added. Meanwhile construction of the light water reactors at Kumho, on the DPRK's northeastern coast, was progressing normally, according to Chang Sun-Sup, chairman of the consortium building them, the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization. "The light water reactor project, as of now, is being carried on as normal with no disruption (from the North Korean) side," he said. "However, we have to wait and watch developments."

3. US response to DPRK Nuclear Situation

Washington Post (Glenn Kessler, "US TAKES NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR PLAN IN STRIDE," Washington, 12/13/02) and Washington File ("WHITE HOUSE REGRETS NORTH KOREA DECISION ON NUCLEAR FACILITY," Washington, 12/12/02) reported that the Bush administration, increasingly focused on the looming confrontation with Iraq, reacted calmly yesterday to the DPRK's announcement that it would restart a nuclear power plant shuttered since 1994. Several officials dismissed the DPRK's announcement as the minimum counter move to a decision last month to cut off monthly heavy fuel oil shipments to the DPRK. A senior administration official declined to say yesterday whether President Bush had any "red lines" that would spark US action if the DPRK stepped over them. "We will take a few days here to consult with others," the official said. "We will take our time and we will work through this whole issue. We've got very strong pressure points on North Korea." The message suggested that the administration's policy on the DPRK has evolved into a single mantra: Make no waves while the focus remains on Iraq. The consensus in the administration on dealing with the DPRK is "remarkable to me," said another official involved in

previous interagency fights. "Everyone understands the president doesn't want 15 crises on his plate."

4. Japan on DPRK Nuclear Resumption

The Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN HOLDS OUT FOR TALKS AS NORTH KOREA RAISES NUCLEAR STAKES," 12/13/02) reported that Japan said it would try to restart stalled talks with the DPRK after the DPRK sparked concern by announcing plans to revive a frozen nuclear program. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda said Friday restarting talks which have been on ice late October was even more important now "to keep this kind of thing from happening." Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi told a news conference: "It would not be desirable if dialogue between Japan and North Korea disappeared completely." Kawaguchi was speaking following a meeting with Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi the morning after the DPRK declared it would "immediately resume the operation and construction of its nuclear facilities to generate electricity." The premier called for "close cooperation among Japan, the United States and South Korea" on the nuclear standoff, Kawaguchi said, adding the matter would be dealt with at Japan-US ministerial security talks in Washington on Monday.

5. ROK-US DPRK Discussions

The Associated Press (Sang-Hun Choe, "BUSH, SOUTH KOREA'S KIM URGE NORTH KOREA NOT TO RESTART ITS NUCLEAR PROGRAM, SAY THEY SEEK PEACEFUL SOLUTION," Seoul, 12/13/02), Reuters ("BUSH, S KOREA'S KIM RAISE PRESSURE ON NORTH KOREA," Washington, 12/13/02) and Reuters (Steve Holland, "BUSH, KIM DISCUSS NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM," Washington, 12/13/02) reported that US President Bush and ROK President Kim Dae-jung on Friday put new pressure on the DPRK over its revived nuclear program, with Kim telling Bush the program was "unacceptable" and agreeing there could be no business as usual with the DPRK. The two leaders spoke by telephone the day after the DPRK said it would restart a nuclear reactor that has been idled under the 1994 Agreed Framework and could be used to produce weapons-grade plutonium. "President Kim noted that North Korea's statement on unfreezing its nuclear program is unacceptable. And then the two leaders agreed to continue seeking a peaceful resolution while not allowing business as usual to continue with North Korea," Fleischer said. The US, ROK, Japan, PRC, Russia and the European Union have all called on the DPRK to give up its nuclear program to little avail so far. One Bush administration official stressed the approach to the DPRK was different than that toward Iraq. "We're working the diplomacy on this. You have a united international front on North Korea and you can try to apply those levers where and when you can," the official said. US officials declined to talk about the possibility that the DPRK could expel International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors, saying only this would be a serious matter.

6. DPRK on US Ship Detainment

The Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA CONDEMNS SEIZURE OF SHIP CARRYING SCUD MISSILES TO YEMEN," Seoul, 12/13/02) and the Agence France-Presse ("NORTH KOREA ATTACKS US FOR DETAINING SHIP CARRYING MISSILES," 12/13/02) reported that the DPRK accused the US of committing piracy and demanded compensation for seizing and detaining its cargo ship while on its way to Yemen carrying missiles. The DPRK admitted that the ship was transporting "missile components and some building materials to be delivered to Yemen" but said the shipment was under a legal contract. "This is an unpardonable piracy that wantonly encroached upon the sovereignty of the DPRK (North Korea)," a foreign ministry spokesman said in a statement carried by the official

Korean Central News Agency. "The United States should apologize for its high-handed piracy committed against the DPRK's trading ship and duly compensate for all the mental and material damage done to the ship and its crew," he said. He also said it was "something very regretful and disappointing" that Spain, which has normal relations with the DPRK, "blindly acted a servant of the US pirate."

7. PRC-US Military Relations

The Agence France-Presse ("US PACIFIC COMMANDER IN CHINA AS IRAQ, NORTH KOREA ISSUES HEAT UP," 12/13/02) reported that the commander-in-chief of the US Pacific Fleet was in Beijing for military talks taking place as the US was grappling with the twin issues of Iraq and the DPRK. Admiral Thomas Fargo's five-day visit, which opened Friday, came amid a flurry of bilateral diplomatic activity, as the US sought the PRC help in keeping the explosive twin issues from overwhelming the US agenda, analysts said. "Things are coming to a head," said Paul Harris, an expert on US foreign policy at Hong Kong's Lingnan University. "The sole US consideration on North Korea, for all the talk of the 'axis of evil', is to force North Korea onto the backburner and to focus on Iraq," he said. Fargo arrived in Beijing just hours after the departure of Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, who had met with PRC officials to discuss Iraq.

8. DPRK Japanese Abductees

The Associated Press (Kenji Hall, "JAPAN ABDUCTEES' FUTURE STILL IN FLUX," Tokyo, 12/13/02) reported that five Japanese abductees allowed to return home to Japan two months ago have caught up with old friends, obtained passports, learned how to drive again. Their futures, however, remain far from clear. Since their return in October, a seeming gesture of goodwill by DPRK leader Kim Jong Il, the five have become the focus of an angry battle of wills between the DPRK and Japan. "The two sides have exhausted nearly all options for reaching an agreement over the abductions. The DPRK is angry and not ready to compromise," said Masao Okonogi, professor of international politics at Keio University in Tokyo. The standoff follows a surprisingly speedy crumbling of what seemed to be a major breakthrough in relations earlier this year. After a first-ever bilateral summit in September, officials began working toward normalizing relations. The early contacts were promising, with both countries reversing decades of intransigence over some of the most emotionally volatile issues. But the budding detente quickly died as outrage in Japan swelled over the abduction issue and the DPRK's later confession to a US official that it was secretly developing nuclear weapons. The abductees' families say they are willing to wait for the DPRK to back down. "We want Japan to stick to its demands. Japan should find out the truth without compromising," said Toru Hasuike, whose younger brother, Kaoru, and his wife, Yukiko Okudo, are back after they were kidnapped together in 1978.

The NAPSNet Daily Report aims to serve as a forum for dialogue and exchange among peace and security specialists. Conventions for readers and a list of acronyms and abbreviations are available to all recipients. For descriptions of the world wide web sites used to gather information for this report, or for more information on web sites with related information, see the collection of other NAPSNet resources.
We invite you to reply to today's report, and we welcome commentary or papers for distribution to the network.

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