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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. Napsnet

1. Alleged DPRK-Syria Cooperation

New York Times (David E. Sanger and Mark Mazzetti, "ISRAELI PLANES STRUCK NUCLEAR SITE INSIDE SYRIA, ANALYSTS SAY", Washington, 2007/10/13) reported that US and foreign officials with access to the intelligence reports said that Israel's air attack on Syria last month was directed against a site that Israeli and US intelligence analysts judged was a partly constructed nuclear reactor, apparently modeled on the DPRK's reactor at Yongbyon. The officials said that the reactor was years away from producing nuclear material, and the role of assistance by the DPRK remains unclear.

Associated Press ("NORTH KOREAN OFFICIAL TO VISIT SYRIA", Seoul, 2007/10/13) reported that the DPRK's Korean Central News Agency said in a brief one-sentence dispatch Choe Thae-bok, speaker of the Supreme People's Assembly, left on Saturday for an overseas trip including a visit to Syria. Choe will also visit Italy during the trip.

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2. DPRK Nuclear Test

Associated Press ("REPORT: N. KOREA FENCE NEAR NUKE SITE", Seoul, 2007/10/14) reported that Yonhap news agency quoted an unidentified ROK official as saying that the DPRK has started building a fence around the site of its first-ever nuclear test. ROK and U.S. authorities presume that the move is aimed at analyzing the outcome of the test and restoring the site, as the DPRK believes the area is now free from radioactive contamination, the source stated. However, another ROK official stated, "activities spotted at Punggyeri are usual" ones.

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3. Northern Limit Line

Joongang Ilbo ("BLUE HOUSE TRIES TO CALM WORRIES OVER SEA BORDER", Seoul, 2007/10/13) reported that ROK government officials on Saturday tried to clarify President Roh Moo-hyun's remarks on the Northern Limit Line not constituting a national border. Chong Wa Dae spokesman Cheon Ho-seon stated, "There can be different views, but there are no differences on the big picture. The government’s position has not changed. The Northern Limit Line is the actual sea border."

Defense Minister Kim Jang-soo added, "It is my understanding that the president was not focusing on the territorial issue, but was talking about the character and background of the Northern Limit Line."

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4. Korean Peninsula Peace Talks

Yonhap ("TOO SOON TO SAY WHEN TO HOLD PEACE TALKS WITH N. KOREA: FOREIGN MINISTER", Seoul, 2007/10/13) reported that ROK Foreign Minister Song Min-soon said Saturday that it is too early to say when negotiations to officially end the Korean War should begin,

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5. US-DPRK Relations

Associated Press ("NKOREA CRITICIZES BUSH REMARK", Seoul, 2007/10/12) reported that the DPRK's official Korean Central News Agency on Friday criticized US President George W. Bush for calling the DPRK one of the world's "brutal regimes" in remarks at the UN last month. "If this is a view of the highest U.S. authority, how can we assess the frequently changing U.S. viewpoint on the DPRK and how can we discuss mutual trust that is key" to resolving the nuclear standoff and improving bilateral relations, KCNA said in a commentary. "Even from now on, the United States should shift its attention to elements negatively affecting the six-party talks ... and maintain consistency in its policy toward the DPRK," it added.

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6. Japan-DPRK Relations

Yonhap ("N. KOREAN ENVOY TO JAPAN TALKS VISITS CHINA AMID HOPES FOR RESUMPTION OF DIALOGUE", Shenyang, 2007/10/13) reported that Song Il-ho, chief envoy in bilateral talks with Japan, arrived on Saturday in Shenyang, PRC in what many believe to be a prelude to the resumption of the normalization talks with Japan. Song refused to elaborate on his visit, saying only that he had come to meet with the DPRK consul-general in Shenyang.

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7. ROK Presidential Election

Yonhap (Sam Kim, "FORMER POINT MAN ON N.KOREA PICKED AS PRO-GOVERNMENT PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE", Seoul, 2007/10/15) reported that former Unification Minister Chung Dong-young on Monday won the presidential nomination of the pro-government party, beating former Gyeonggi governor Sohn Hak-kyu and ex-Prime Minister Lee Hae-chan. Koh Yu-hwan, a political scientist at Dongguk University in Seoul, predicted that Chung would use his experience in negotiating with the DPRK as part of his campaign appeal. "Chung will try to carve out an image that he is more skillful in dealing with the North than Lee, whose political base is largely made of hardliners toward Pyongyang," said Koh.

Korea Times (Kim Rahn, "CHUNG'S INVOLVEMENT NOT FOUND", Seoul, 2007/10/12) reported that police said Friday that they had not found any evidence that Chung Dong-young, one of three presidential contenders for the United New Democratic Party (UNDP), was involved in the alleged illegal mobilization of voters for the nomination race. But it said it will continue the investigation even after the nomination ends Sunday, adding that three pro-Chung campaigners are being questioned on their role in the affair.

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8. Cross Strait Relations

Reuters (Ben Blanchard, "CHINA'S PRESIDENT OFFERS TAIWAN TALKS FOR PEACE", Beijing, 2007/10/15) reported that PRC President Hu Jintao, addressing the opening of the Communist Party's 17th Congress, offered on Monday to enter into negotiations with Taiwan on a peace agreement. "We would like to make a solemn appeal: on the basis of the one-China principle let us discuss a formal end to the state of hostility between the two sides (and) reach a peace agreement," Hu said. "We are ready to conduct exchanges, dialogue, consultations and negotiations with any political party in Taiwan on any issue as long as it recognizes that both sides of the Straits belong to one and the same China," he added.

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9. PRC Military

Associated Press (Scott McDonald, "CHINA'S HU PUSHES FOR MODERN MILITARY", Beijing, 2007/10/15) reported that PRC President Hu Jintao said Monday that he will speed up the country's military modernization during the next five years. "In keeping with the new trends in world military affairs and the new requirements of China's development, we must promote innovation in military theory, technology, organization and development," Hu said. He added that the PRC will "adjust and reform the systems of defense-related science, technology and industry and of weapons and equipment procurement, and enhance our capacity for independent innovation in research and development of weapons and equipment."

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10. PRC Leadership

New York Times (Joseph Kahn, "NEW CHINA HIERARCHY MAY LIMIT PRESIDENT'S POWER", Beijing, 2007/10/13) reported that the PRC Communist Party's Central Committee agreed to elevate

four senior officials to the ruling Politburo Standing Committee. As only one of them clearly owed his rise in the hierarchy to the patronage of President Hu Jintao, the move prevents Hu from consolidating power in his final five-year term in office.

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11. Proliferation Security Initiative

Associated Press ("7-NATION NAVAL EXERCISE STARTS", Tokyo, 2007/10/13) reported that ships and aircraft from Australia, France, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, Britain and the United States began Pacific Shield 07 exercises Saturday. The exercises involve the mock interception of vessels suspected of carrying weapons of mass destruction as part of the U.S.-originated Proliferation Security Initiative. Japan's Foreign Ministry said this is the second time Japan has hosted such drills, the first being in 2004.

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II. Republic of Korea

12. West Sea Border Clashes

Yonhap ("DPRK, 135 NLL INVASIONS AFTER 2001 ", Seoul, 2007/10/14) reported that here were 135 violations of the Northern Limit Line (NLL) by the DPRK since 2001. According to the report, "Examples of Failures in North-South Confidence-Building" by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 65 violations were by patrol boats, and 37 times by fishing boats. There was no reaction before the skirmish in Yellow Sea in 2002 and after that ROK reacted against the invasions with military actions and warning shots in 2003 and 2004. Since 2005 there has been no reaction again.

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13. West Sea Peace Zone

Hankyoreh (Son Won-je, "NLL IS A KOREAN DECISION ", Seoul, 2007/10/14) reported that Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Song Min-soon said about the Northern Limit Line (NLL), "there will be a discussion with the U.S. if it is necessary but basically we are going to make our own decision because we are in fact the ones protecting the line." However it is quite obvious that U.S. has a will to take part in this issue through the United Nations Command. The U.S. Ambassador to Korea, Alexander Vershbow, emphasized earlier that the Special West Sea Peace Zone will develop in consultation with the UNC.

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14. Unification Expenses

Chosun Ilbo (Choi Bo-sik, "IT'S ALL ABOUT MONEY", Seoul, 2007/10/14) reported that it would hard for the ROK to afford the money for unification. As evidenced by German unification, it needs a tremendous amount of money. ROK President Roh Moo-huyn said "the expenses of the summit is not a concern at this time. US$13 billion will be spent in the next year, which is only 1% of tax revenues, so it will not impose a heavy burden." At the time of German unification, GDP per capita of East Germany was one-third of that of West Germany. Even in this gap, the unification was told as a huge disaster. The DPRK's GDP per capita is only one-tenth of ROK's and it simply means the ROK cannot afford unification.

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