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Contents in this Issue:

- I. NAPSNet
 - [1. US-DPRK Relations](#)
 - [2. DPRK Nuclear Program](#)
 - [3. PRC on DPRK Nuclear Program](#)
 - [4. DPRK Economy](#)
 - [5. DPRK Defectors](#)
 - [6. Sino-DPRK Relations](#)
 - [7. DPRK Leadership](#)
 - [8. ROK-US Military Cooperation](#)
 - [9. ROK Defense Exports](#)
 - [10. ROK Climate Change](#)
 - [11. ROK-Japan Relations](#)
 - [12. USFJ Base Relocation](#)
 - [13. Japan Self-Defense Force](#)
 - [14. Japan on Nuclear Arsenals](#)
 - [15. Japan Climate Change](#)
 - [16. Japan Abductee Issue](#)

- [17. Sino-Japan Relations](#)
- [18. PRC Internet](#)
- [19. PRC Climate Change](#)
- [20. PRC Civil Rights](#)
- [21. Cross-Straits Relations](#)
- [22. US-Taiwan Military Cooperation](#)

[Preceding NAPSNet Report](#)

MARKTWO

I. NAPSNet

1. US-DPRK Relations

Associated Press (Kwang-tae Kim, "OBAMA WRITES LETTER TO NKOREAN LEADER", Seoul, 2009/12/16) reported that US envoy Stephen Bosworth took a personal letter to leader DPRK leader Kim Jong-il written by US President Barack Obama during his recent trip to Pyongyang, a senior U.S. official said. The official, who spoke Tuesday on condition of anonymity, would not describe the contents of the letter but said they fit with Bosworth's general message. "The North Koreans have a choice: continued and further isolation or benefits for returning to the six-party talks and dismantling their nuclear weapons program," the official said.

[\(return to top\)](#)

2. DPRK Nuclear Program

Agence France Presse ("US ENVOY CONCERNED ABOUT N.KOREA URANIUM: OFFICIAL", Seoul, 2009/12/15) reports that US envoy Stephen Bosworth voiced concerns during his visit to the DPRK last week about the country's uranium enrichment programme, an ROK ruling party official said Tuesday. The ROK's chief nuclear envoy Wi Sung-Lac told lawmakers that the US envoy had raised concerns about the enrichment programme at talks with the DPRK officials, a Grand National Party (GNP) official told AFP. Wi's comments were made as he briefed GNP lawmakers on his meeting with Bosworth, the official said on condition of anonymity. Wi, however, told the lawmakers there were no formal discussions between Bosworth and the DPRK authorities over the issue, the official said.

[\(return to top\)](#)

3. PRC on DPRK Nuclear Program

Yonhap (Lee Chi-dong, "CHINA COMMITTED TO ENFORCING U.N. SANCTIONS ON NORTH KOREA: ENVOY", Seoul, 2009/12/15) reports that the PRC has a heavy responsibility in implementing U.N. sanctions on the DPRK while simultaneously staying committed to economic cooperation with its reclusive neighbor, Beijing's ambassador to Seoul said Tuesday. "The PRC maintains normal economic cooperation with the DPRK as the neighboring countries have traditionally had friendly relations. But this should not be seen as mixed with the contents of the U.N. resolution (on Pyongyang)," Amb. Cheng Yonghua told Yonhap News Agency. "

[\(return to top\)](#)

4. DPRK Economy

Bloomberg (Bomi Lim, "N. KOREA SHUTS MARKETS AS NEW BANKNOTES STROKE PRICES", 2009/12/15) reports that the DPRK shut street markets to buy time to bring down prices that have surged since a recent currency revaluation. The three-day closure, which began Monday, came after markets sold most goods for more than double the revised prices set by the regime and announced on Dec. 9, Good Friends said today on its Web site. The government may readjust the state prices, according to the group.

Yonhap (Kim Hyun, "N. KOREA ESTABLISHES NEW ECONOMIC LAWS FOLLOWING CURRENCY CHANGE ", Seoul, 2009/12/16) reported that the DPRK has introduced a swathe of new laws on the economy, including regulations on consumption, Korean Central News Agency said Wednesday. "The Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly has newly adopted and announced a set of laws in several categories," the KCNA said. These are a real estate management law, a law on the standard of commodities consumption and a law on the import of general facilities, the report said.

[\(return to top\)](#)

5. DPRK Defectors

Bernama ("ILLEGAL NORTH KOREAN IMMIGRANTS ARRESTED BY THAI POLICE", Phayao, 2009/12/15) reported that over 40 illegal DPRK migrants were arrested in Thailand's northern province of Phayao, according to the Thai News agency's report on Tuesday. ??The news agency reported that fourteen were arrested on a coach headed for Bangkok and were later taken to a police station in the provincial seat. ??According to the initial investigation, the party left the DPRK due to its famine and their facing the possibility of starvation, via the PRC's Yunnan province.

[\(return to top\)](#)

6. Sino-DPRK Relations

Yonhap News ("N. KOREA'S SECURITY MINISTER VISITS CHINA", 2009/12/15) reported that the DPRK's security minister travelled to the PRC Tuesday, the DPRK's media reported, in the first such trip by the country's security minister in over a decade. A delegation led by Ju Sang-song, head of the DPRK's Ministry of People's Security, left Pyongyang for the PRC by air, the DPRK's Korean Central News Agency said in a brief dispatch. The report did not explain details of the trip, such as the purpose and the length of the visit, or who Ju will meet in the PRC.

[\(return to top\)](#)

7. DPRK Leadership

Associated Press ("REPORT: NKOREAN LEADER KIM'S HEALTH WORSENS", Seoul, 2009/12/16) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il is suffering from chronic laryngitis — probably because of excessive smoking and drinking — and he can't work without resting every other day, Open Radio for North Korea said Wednesday. The station cited an unidentified "high-level source" in the DPRK. ROK officials could not confirm the report.

[\(return to top\)](#)

8. ROK-US Military Cooperation

Xinhua News Agency ("S KOREA, U.S. TO CREATE JOINT DEFENSE GUIDELINES", Seoul, 2009/12/15) reported that ROK and the United States are planning to create a joint defense guidelines next year to further confirm their military alliance, local media reported on Tuesday. The two countries are working on the guidelines as part of their efforts to follow up on a joint statement entitled "The Joint Vision for the Republic of Korea (ROK)-U.S. Alliance" reached by ROK President Lee Myung-bak and his U.S. counterpart Barack Obama when they met in Washington in June this year, officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Ministry of National Defense were quoted as saying. The guidelines are expected to substantially raise the level of the alliance and cooperation between the two countries, local media said.

Korea Times (Gerry Gilmore, "SOUTH KOREA ON TRACK TO ASSUME DEFENSE LEAD", Washington DC, 2009/12/15) reported that the ROK's military is on track to assume the lead for its nation's defense as scheduled a little more than two years from now, the top U.S. military officer posted there said. The ROK military possesses the professionalism and capability "to take command of a war fight, if we had to go to war on the peninsula," Army Gen. Walter "Skip" Sharp said today at the Center for Strategy and International Studies.

[\(return to top\)](#)

9. ROK Defense Exports

Yonhap News ("S. KOREA'S DEFENSE EXPORTS REACH US\$1.1 BLN ", Seoul, 2009/12/15) reported that the ROK has exported US\$1.1 billion worth of defense items so far this year and is expected to achieve its annual target by year's end, Seoul's weapons procurement agency said Tuesday. The ROK last year exported over \$1 billion worth of defense products for the first time in its history. The country set a goal of US\$1.2 billion for this year.

[\(return to top\)](#)

10. ROK Climate Change

Yonhap (Byun Duk-kun, "LEE TO PROPOSE NEW INT'L BODY TO FIGHT GLOBAL WARMING",

Seoul, 2009/12/15) reports that the ROK President Lee Myung-bak will call for the establishment of a new international research and development institute to better fight climate change when he attends a U.N. climate summit in Copenhagen later this week, the presidential office Cheong Wa Dae said Tuesday. In a keynote speech at the summit, Lee will also propose beginning discussions on "how" to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, noting the world has already agreed on "how much" will be done to fight global warming.

Yonhap News (Na Jeong-ju, "", 2009/12/15) reported that President Lee Myung-bak pledged Tuesday to play a bridging role between developed and emerging economies to help them narrow differences regarding how to cut greenhouse gases and address global warming. Lee made the pledge during a telephone conversation with U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. Ban told Lee that the international community has high expectations for the ROK to take on a bigger role to set up the future course of action in fighting climate change.

[\(return to top\)](#)

11. ROK-Japan Relations

The Korea Herald ("PRESIDENT LEE CALLS FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH JAPAN", Seoul, 2009/12/15) reports that the ROK President Lee Myung-bak urged on Tuesday joint efforts by the ROK and Japan to improve their bilateral relations and increased exchanges in the political and cultural sectors. The call came in a meeting with a group of five Japanese legislators on a visit here for the annual meeting of a joint parliamentary committee on ROK-Japan cooperation. "President Lee said exchanges between the countries' young leaders from various sectors, including the political circle, is especially important for developing ties," Lee's office said in a press release.

[\(return to top\)](#)

12. USFJ Base Relocation

Bloomberg (Sachiko Sakamaki and Takashi Hirokawa, "JAPAN DECISION ON OKINAWA BASE WILL TAKE MONTHS, HATOYAMA SAYS", 2009/12/15) reports that Japan's Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama said it will take several months to reach a decision on where to move a U.S. military base on Okinawa, prolonging a rift with the country's biggest ally. Hatoyama said it could be May before his administration decides what to do about the Futenma Marine Corps Air Station. He has resisted U.S. pressure to adhere to a 2006 agreement to keep the base on the island, while refusing to commit to moving it elsewhere in response to local complaints over noise, crime and pollution.

Kyodo News ("U.S. CALLS JAPAN'S POSTPONED DECISION ON NEW U.S. BASE 'UNFORTUNATE'", Washington DC, 2009/12/15) reported that Japan's postponement of a decision on the issue of where to relocate a key U.S. military base in Okinawa Prefecture is "unfortunate," the commandant of the U.S. Marine Corp. said Tuesday. "If that is their decision, then I think it's unfortunate in terms of what we're attempting to plan on our end," Gen. James Conway told reporters when asked about Tokyo's postponement without setting any deadline.

Kyodo ("JAPAN AIMS TO BASICALLY ABIDE BY ACCORD ON REALIGNMENT OF U.S. FORCES ", Tokyo, 2009/12/16) reported that Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirofumi Hirano said Wednesday that

Japan intends basically to abide by the 2006 Japanese-U.S. agreement on the realignment of U.S. forces in the country. "The government takes the stance that it will not seek to change the current road map on the U.S. military," Hirano said at a news conference. "But on the issue of bases in Okinawa," he said, "the three parties (forming Hatoyama's coalition government) should be thinking in a forward-looking manner." He added, "There could be some variations in future negotiations between Japan and the United States."

[\(return to top\)](#)

13. Japan Self-Defense Force

AFP ("JAPAN TO HALT NEW MISSILE DEFENCE SPENDING", Tokyo, 2009/12/15) reports that Japan 's centre-left government will likely freeze new spending on its joint missile defence system with the United States after the cabinet decided on budget cuts , media reports said on Tuesday. The cabinet's decision would probably delay the deployment of new Patriot Advanced Capability-3 interceptors (PAC-3) until after April 2011, said Kyodo News and other major media, citing unnamed sources. Defence Minister Toshimi Kitazawa declined to elaborate on the media reports and the cabinet's budget decision but later told reporters: "I cannot say we were able to secure sufficient resources."

[\(return to top\)](#)

14. Japan on Nuclear Arsenals

AFP ("AUSTRALIA, JAPAN WANT HUGE CUTS IN NUCLEAR ARSENALS", Tokyo, 2009/12/15) reports that the centre-left prime ministers of Japan and Australia on Tuesday voiced support for a report calling for a cut of more than 90 percent in the world's nuclear arsenals. The two leaders issued their appeal after the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament called for the global stockpile of nuclear weapons to be cut to 2,000 from 23,000 -- 22,000 of them held by the United States and Russia -- by 2025. Australia's Prime Minister Kevin Rudd travelled to Tokyo to meet his Japanese counterpart, Yukio Hatoyama , for the launch of the report, which was commissioned by both their governments.

[\(return to top\)](#)

15. Japan Climate Change

Bloomberg (Shigeru Sato, "JAPAN PLANS \$10 BILLION IN CLIMATE AID, TOKYO SHIMBUN SAYS", 2009/12/15) reports that Japan will pledge \$10 billion to help developing countries combat global warming and protect biodiversity, the Tokyo Shimbun newspaper said today. Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama will announce the aid on Dec. 18 in Copenhagen, the paper said, where 192 countries are bargaining over a climate-protection treaty to replace the Kyoto Protocol. An Environment Ministry spokesman who declined to be named because of internal rules wouldn't comment on the report when reached by phone in Tokyo today.

[\(return to top\)](#)

16. Japan Abductee Issue

Yomiuri Shimbun ("GOVT COMPROMISE ON ABDUCTEES? / CABINET DROPS HANDOVER OF N. KOREAN ABDUCTORS FROM LIST OF DEMANDS", 2009/12/15) reported that the new government has removed the handover of DPRK agents who abducted Japanese citizens from the six-point government policy on the abduction issue, government sources said Tuesday. Hiroshi Nakai, chairman of the National Public Safety Commission, who is responsible for the abduction issue, said, "Our stance of demanding the handover of the abductors has not changed." But a fear is spreading among family members of abductees who said that they did not understand the attitude of the Hatoyama administration toward the issue, because the action can be interpreted as a concession to DPRK in future negotiations.

[\(return to top\)](#)

17. Sino-Japan Relations

Bloomberg (Mike Firm and Aaron Sheldrick, "EMPEROR AKIHITO'S TOKYO MEETING WITH CHINA'S XI DRAWS PROTESTS", 2009/12/15) reports that Japan's Emperor Akihito sat down with the PRC's Vice President Xi Jinping for a meeting that some politicians said breached protocol, drawing several hundred protesters outside Tokyo's imperial palace. The demonstrators, mostly from right-wing groups known as "uyoku," waved Japanese flags and chanted slogans against the meeting as police barred them from approaching the palace. National broadcaster NHK Television showed images of Xi shaking hands with Akihito before the two sat down for talks.

Associated Press ("LDP LEADER CALLS FOR CHINESE MILITARY TRANSPARENCY IN MEETING WITH XI", Tokyo, 2009/12/15) reported that Sadakazu Tanigaki, the leader of Japan's main opposition Liberal Democratic Party, told visiting PRC Vice President Xi Jinping in talks Tuesday that the PRC should disclose more information on its defense budget and military buildup, LDP lawmakers said. Xi pledged continuing efforts for transparency, they said. Xi told Yokomichi that he hopes to strengthen a wide range of exchanges, while Yokomichi expressed hope that the two countries will cooperate closely not only on bilateral but global issues including nuclear nonproliferation, disarmament, the environment and economic matters.

AFP (Hiroshi Hiyama, "CHINA'S VP STRESSES JAPAN TIES AMID ROYAL PROTOCOL FLAP", Tokyo, 2009/12/15) reports that the PRC's Vice President Xi Jinping in Japan Tuesday stressed the importance of good ties between the Asian giants. Xi, who is expected to succeed Hu Jintao as the PRC's president in 2012, said Tokyo and Beijing "must enhance the mutual political trust, expand mutual interests and improve the public sentiment of the two nations." He also emphasized the PRC's commitment to "peaceful development."

[\(return to top\)](#)

18. PRC Internet

Financial Times (Kathrin Hille, "CHINA BANS INDIVIDUAL WEB DOMAIN NAMES", Beijing, 2009/12/15) reports that the PRC has banned individuals from registering internet domain names and launched a review of millions of existing personal websites in the toughest government

censorship drive so far on the internet. As of Monday, people applying to register a domain name in the PRC must present a company chop and a business licence, the PRC Internet Network Information Center, a government-backed body, said in a statement. Internet service providers said they had started to review their client base for potentially fraudulent or "harmful" individually owned sites. The term "harmful" is often used by the government as a catch-all that covers everything from pornography to anti-state activity.

[\(return to top\)](#)

19. PRC Climate Change

Los Angeles Times (Barbara Demick, "GLACIERS IN SOUTHERN CHINA RECEDING RAPIDLY, SCIENTISTS SAY", 2009/12/15) reported that Yulong Snow Mountain, which used to be a brilliant white, is now mostly gray, worrying those who study it and see it as a sort of canary in a coal mine. He Yuanqing, one of the PRC's leading glacier experts, found that the mountain's largest glacier, known as Baishui No. 1, has retreated about 275 yards since 1982. "At this rate, the glacier could disappear entirely over the next few decades," said He, who heads a team of scientists who have been studying Yulong mountain since 1999 for the Cold and Arid Regions Environmental and Engineering Research Institute, a government-run think tank.

Associated Press (Cara Anna, "CHINA ACCUSES DEVELOPED COUNTRIES ON CLIMATE", Beijing, 2009/12/15) reported that the PRC accused developed countries Tuesday of backsliding on what it said were their obligations to fight climate change and warned that the U.N. climate talks in Copenhagen had entered a critical stage. In sharp comments made as the atmosphere at the U.N. climate conference in Copenhagen grows more divisive, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu said there had been "some regression" on the part of developed countries on their position regarding financial support. The change in their position "will hamper the Copenhagen conference," Jiang told a regular news conference in Beijing.

[\(return to top\)](#)

20. PRC Civil Rights

Associated Press (Cara Anna, "CHINA REJECTS CALL TO FREE DISSIDENT", Beijing, 2009/12/15) reported that the PRC on Tuesday rejected U.S. calls to release a high-profile dissident who has been indicted on subversion charges after calling for political reform in the PRC. State Department spokesman Ian Kelly told reporters the United States is worried that Liu may have been detained or harassed because he signed a charter that demanded democratic change and respect for human rights in the PRC. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu rejected those charges. "Those accusations are unacceptable to China. ... Only those who break the law will be punished by the law," Jiang said. Kelly says the United States has raised Liu's case repeatedly with PRC officials since Liu was taken into custody a year ago.

[\(return to top\)](#)

21. Cross-Straits Relations

Taiwan News ("ANTI-CHINA PROTESTERS MIGHT LAY SIEGE TO THE PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE",

2009/12/16) reported that if President Ma Ying-jeou continued on his course of improving relations with the PRC without consulting the public, protesters should consider traveling up to Taipei to lay siege to the Presidential Office, a lawmaker from the opposition Democratic Progressive Party said. The DPP is planning to rally 100,000 people in Taichung Sunday on the eve of the Dec. 21-25 visit to the city by PRC top envoy Chen Yunlin. The DPP says the government should provide more information about its plans to sign an Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement with the PRC next year.

[\(return to top\)](#)

22. US-Taiwan Military Cooperation

New York Times (Edward Wong, "ARMS SALES TO TAIWAN WILL PROCEED, U.S. SAYS", Beijing, 2009/12/15) reported that the Obama administration will proceed with arms sales to Taiwan despite recent protests by PRC officials, an American official said Tuesday. The official, Raymond Burghardt, is chairman of the American Institute in Taipei, the de facto United States Embassy in Taiwan. Speaking in a telephone interview from Hawaii he said that sales of arms to Taiwan were consistent with what White House officials have been saying was President Obama's policy. "No one should be surprised when we move forward with them," he said.

[\(return to top\)](#)

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