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CONTENTS

I. United States

1. US Response to DPRK Nuclear Weapons Development
2. ROK Response to DPRK Nuclear Weapons Development
3. PRC Response to DPRK Nuclear Weapons Development
4. DPRK-Japan Relations
5. Japanese Abduction Issue
6. Cross-Straits Relations

I. United States

1. US Response to DPRK Nuclear Weapons Development

The Associated Press (George Gedda, "NORTH KOREA TOLD TO RENOUNCE NUKES," Washington, 10/17/02) reported that US President George W. Bush believes it is "troubling, sobering news" that the DPRK has a nuclear weapons program, his spokesman said Thursday. Talking to reporters who accompanied Bush, spokesman Scott McClellan said the president planned to bring up the issue in talks next week with PRC President Jiang Zemin. McClellan said that Bush decided to address the issue through diplomatic channels. "We seek a peaceful solution," he said. The US and ROK are calling on the DPRK to reverse course and abide by promises to renounce development of these armaments. The startling disclosure, revealed Wednesday night by the White House, changed the political landscape in East Asia, setting back hopes that the DPRK was on the road to becoming a more benign presence in the region. The DPRK acknowledged the existence of the program during meetings with US officials earlier this month. Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly called attention to bills of sale and other evidence of commercial transactions as proof that the DPRK was attempting to produce enriched uranium, an administration official said. Privately, White House officials said Bush and his senior advisers decided to confront the problem in a low-key fashion. Bush, for example, planned no public statements on it Thursday. A senior US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the DPRK acknowledged having "more powerful" weapons. US officials

have interpreted that statement as an acknowledgment that the DPRK has other weapons of mass destruction. However, the same officials say they are unsure whether the DPRK actually does possess biological or chemical weapons.

Reuters (Charles Aldinger, "RUMSFELD SAYS THINKS N.KOREA HAS NUCLEAR WEAPONS," Washington, 10/17/02) reported that the US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said on Thursday he believed the DPRK already had a small number of nuclear weapons although US intelligence had not confirmed it. "I have not touched them," Rumsfeld said of such arms a day after the US said the DPRK had openly admitted continuing to develop nuclear weapons in violation of international agreements. "They (intelligence officials) have not touched them. No one that I would have any confidence in their judgment has touched them." "But I believe they have a small number of nuclear weapons," the secretary told reporters at a Pentagon briefing, going beyond the US long-standing official intelligence assessment of the nuclear situation on the Korean peninsula. Rumsfeld noted the US intelligence community had long been concerned about the DPRK's desire for nuclear arms. The secretary stood by Bush's charge that Iraq was a greater immediate threat to the United States and international community because of Baghdad's weapons programs and President Saddam Hussein's history of using chemical and biological weapons.

Reuters ("WHITE HOUSE CALLS NORTH KOREA ADMISSION 'TROUBLING,'" Atlanta, 10/17/02) reported that White House spokesman Scott McClellan told reporters that Bush sees the DPRK challenge differently from the threat posed by Iraq, which the White House says also has weapons of mass destruction. "This is a serious violation of the Agreed Framework and the Nonproliferation Treaty. The president believes this is troubling, sobering news," McClellan told reporters aboard Air Force One as Bush flew to Atlanta. Asked why the North Korean situation differed from Iraq, McClellan said that Iraq is an aggressive regime run by a "homicidal dictator" who threatens his neighbors. "These are different regions, different

2. ROK Response to DPRK Nuclear Weapons Development

The Associated Press (Christopher Torchia, "S. KOREA WON'T END TALKS WITH NORTH," Seoul, 10/17/02) reported that despite criticism of its efforts to engage the DPRK, the ROK asserted Thursday that dialogue is the best way to deal with concerns about the DPRK's nuclear weapons program. Other ROK officials said the DPRK's confession may be sign that it wants to resolve the problem through negotiations rather than confrontation. They planned to raise the issue in Cabinet-level talks this weekend with the DPRK, which has yet to comment. The admission left the ROK in a quandary. The two nations have worked with another to improve their relationship, most recently undertaking the construction of cross-border roads and railways. "Our basic position is that any problems with the DPRK should be resolved through dialogue," said Han Sang-il, chief spokesman for the ROK Unification Ministry.

3. PRC Response to DPRK Nuclear Weapons Development

The Associated Press (Audra Ang, "CHINA SAYS IT HAS POLICY OF 'NOT SUPPORTING' DEVELOPMENT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS," Beijingm 10/17/02) reported that the PRC denounced the "proliferation of any weapons of mass destruction" on Thursday-- a revelation that could put some distance between the two Asian neighbors and allies. "We pursue a policy of not supporting, not encouraging and not helping other countries in the development of weapons of mass destruction," Zhang Qiyue, a PRC Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, said at a regularly scheduled briefing. Zhang chose her words carefully. But while the DPRK was never directly chided, she reiterated what she says often: that the PRC encourages peace in that region. "We have always

supported denuclearization in the Korean peninsula," she said. "The nuclear issue of North Korea should be settled through dialogue and negotiation, and should be settled peacefully." She said the PRC was "opposed to the proliferation of any weapons of mass destruction."

4. DPRK-Japan Relations

Reuters ("RED ARMY HIJACKERS RAISED CHILDREN AS JAPANESE IN NORTH KOREA," Tokyo, 10/17/02) reported that a group of Japanese leftist radicals who have lived in the DPRK since they hijacked a plane there in 1970 had no contact with more than a dozen Japanese who were kidnapped and taken to the DPRK, the group's legal adviser said Thursday. The Red Army hijackers and the abductees have long been a thorn in relations between Japan and the DPRK. In a major breakthrough, the DPRK allowed the five known surviving kidnap victims to return this week after nearly a quarter of a century. The radicals have also informed their supporters in Japan that they intend to come home soon, in what many DPRK watchers say is a concession to Japanese demands they be tried for the hijacking. The nine radicals, their Japanese wives and twenty children maintained a tightly knit community in Pyongyang, said Yukio Yamanaka, head of the legal support group that has already overseen the return of two wives and eight children to Japan. Children were drilled at home in Japanese language and customs and have grown up to speak Japanese well, he said. Their situation contrasts starkly with that of the returning abductees, who hid their Japanese identities for years, pretending they were returning ethnic Koreans. Some of their children reportedly never knew their parents were Japanese. The survivors have said they lived for years in the same community without knowing their respective backgrounds. The four surviving hijacking suspects have been told Japan refuses to offer them clemency if they return, Yamanaka said. He did not specify if or when they would return, but said he hopes to bring six more of their children to Japan by early next year. The group of visiting kidnap victims is scheduled to return to North Korea perhaps sometime next week. It is not clear if they will ever return to permanently live in Japan, but the government is making preparations to enable them to do so, if they choose.

5. Japanese Abduction Issue

The Associated Press (Kenji Hall, "TWO ABDUCTEES SEEK JAPAN PASSPORTS," Kashiwazaki, 10/17/02) reported that after nearly a quarter century in the DPRK, five Japanese kidnapped by spies returned to their homes Thursday, and at least two of them applied for Japanese passports. It was unclear, however, how their move might affect their plans to return to the DPRK and questions remained over whether they could - or even wanted to - stay in Japan for good. The five have been greeted by cheering crowds since arriving in Tokyo on Tuesday - the country's most emotional homecoming since World War II. Their visit was scheduled to last only 10 days, and they were forced to leave children in the DPRK. However, Yasushi Chimura and his wife, Fukie Hamamoto, applied for Japanese passports Thursday in their hometown of Obama, state official Ryochi Niwamoto said. Niwamoto said the two would receive passports Friday, but he would not speculate on their intentions in requesting the travel documents. Earlier in the day, Chimura hinted that he couldn't turn his back on the DPRK, saying he had already laid down roots: "We have married, raised children, lived happy lives there."

6. Cross-Straits Relations

The Associated Press ("TAIWAN URGES CHINA TO BEGIN TALKS ON OPENING DIRECT AIR, SEA LINKS," Taipei, 10/17/02) reported that Taiwan urged the PRC on Thursday to begin talks on reopening long-severed direct air and sea links after the PRC's vice premier was quoted in an

interview as saying he is willing to set aside a sovereignty dispute and negotiate the matter. PRC Vice Premier Qian Qichen stated that opening direct links with Taiwan is purely an economic issue and does not require the island to first recognize the "one-China" principle. Qian said China is willing to consider the links simply as "cross-strait routes," since Taiwan refuses to view them as "special domestic routes." Qian's remarks raised hopes about long-delayed negotiations on opening air and sea links. In Taipei, Premier Yu Shyi-kun declined to comment directly on Qian's interview, but said he hopes the PRC "can put aside all obstacles and sit down to talk with us." Yu told lawmakers that Taiwan's government has already prepared for opening the links. Chiou I-jen, secretary general of Taiwan's National Security Council, said Qian's comments were an "encouraging" change. Chen Shih-meng, spokesman for President Chen Shui-bian, said Taiwan will not oppose direct links as long as the island's security can be safeguarded.

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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Ilmin Internationl Relations Institute
BK21 The Education and Research Corps for East Asian Studies
Department of Political Science, Korea University, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Center for American Studies,
Fudan University, Shanghai, People's Republic of China

International Peace Research Institute (PRIME),
Meiji Gakuin University, Tokyo, Japan

Monash Asia Institute,
Monash University, Clayton, Australia

Brandon Yu: napsnet@nautilus.org
Berkeley, California, United States

Timothy L. Savage: napsnet@nautilus.org
Berkeley, California, United States

Kim Young-soo: yskim328@hotmail.com
Seoul, Republic of Korea

Hibiki Yamaguchi: hibikiy84@hotmail.com
Tokyo, Japan

Saiko Iwata: saiko@akira.ne.jp
Tokyo, Japan

Hiroya Takagi: hiroya_takagi@hotmail.com
Tokyo, Japan

Peter Razvin: icipu@online.ru
Moscow, Russian Federation

Wu Chunsi: cswu@fudan.ac.cn
Shanghai, People's Republic of China

Dingli Shen: dlshen@fudan.ac.cn
Shanghai, People's Republic of China

John McKay: John.McKay@adm.monash.edu.au
Clayton, Australia

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Nautilus Institute
608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email: nautilus@nautilus.org