



NAPSNet Daily Report 18 February, 2010

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report 18 February, 2010", NAPSNet Daily Report, February 18, 2010,
<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-18-february-2010/>

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I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Nuclear Program

Korea Times ("N. KOREA TO POSSESS 14-18 NUCLEAR WARHEADS BY 2019", 2010/02/17) reported that a U.S. scholar said that the DPRK could produce up to 14 to 18 nuclear warheads by 2019 if multilateral talks on its denuclearization fail. In a report, titled "Four Scenarios for a Nuclear North Korea," Joel Wit, a visiting fellow at the U.S. Korea Institute at the School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, said that the DPRK's "current nuclear stockpile is believed to consist of sufficient plutonium to build four to eight weapons." "By using existing stocks of fresh fuel, North Korea could produce a bomb's worth of plutonium each year from 2011 to 2013," he was quoted as saying by Yonhap News Agency.

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2. DPRK on Nuclear Talks

Korea Herald ("NORTH KOREA MAINTAINS CONDITIONS FOR RESTARTING NUCLEAR NEGOTIATIONS, U.N. ENVOY SAYS", 2010/02/17) reported that the DPRK continues to indicate that it is prepared to return to paralyzed nuclear disarmament negotiations after being freed from U.N. sanctions and beginning peace talks with the United States, a U.N. envoy said yesterday. U.N. political affairs chief Lynn Pascoe, who returned last week from a brief trip to Pyongyang, told reporters in New York that "the devil is in the details." He would not address those specifics, asserting that the United Nations was merely a "messenger" and not a participant in the six-nation talks.

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3. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Program

Daily NK ("DENUCLEARIZATION REWARDS COULD EQUAL RUMORED INVESTMENT", 2010/02/17) reported that Han Deuk Su, the ROK Ambassador to the U.S., predicts that the scale of economic aid the DPRK could receive as a reward from the international community for denuclearization might reach ten billion dollars, the same amount as that which is allegedly set to be invested in the country by a PRC-led group. On Wednesday, Ambassador Han told a conference held by the American Chamber of Commerce in Korea, "If North Korea dismantles its whole nuclear

program, international economic aid, let alone regime security, will be assured." Regarding reports that the DPRK is about to receive ten billion dollars of foreign investment, Han was quick to point out, "It is not certain whether this will actually happen or not."

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4. Inter-Korean Relations

Korea Times ("N. KOREA PANEL AGAINST S. KOREA'S SECURITY LAW DISBANDED", 2010/02/17) reported that the DPRK committee with the aim of abolishing the ROK's anti-communist National Security Law is presumed to have been dissolved last year, an official at the Ministry of Unification said Wednesday. A leading DPRK watcher, however, said the communist DPRK appears not to have changed its stance regarding the ROK's security law that prohibits, among other things, unauthorized contact between ROK and DPRK citizens. "It is too early to say that the committee has been abolished for any particular reason. It may just be suspending its activities or it may have been absorbed into other organizations," Prof. Yang Moo-jin at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul told The Korea Times.

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5. US Food Aid to the DPRK

Yonhap News ("U.S. HINTS AT RESUMING FOOD AID TO N. KOREA: STATE DEPT. ", 2010/02/17) reported that the United States hinted at restarting food aid to the DPRK, which was suspended early last year amid heightened tensions over its nuclear and missile tests. "The efforts on trying to achieve a non-nuclear North Korea should not in any way be connected with efforts to improve the lives of ordinary North Koreans," State Department deputy spokesman Gordon Duguid said in a daily news briefing. "The United States is trying to help the people of North Korea in whatever ways we can."

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6. UN-DPRK Relations

RTTNews ("U.N.-NORTH KOREA HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE OPENED: PASCOE", 2010/02/17) reported that Lynn Pascoe, political chief of U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, expressed satisfaction with the talks he had with DPRK officials during his just-concluded four-day trip to that Stalinist nation. The U.N. Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs said the world body had opened a high-level dialogue with the reclusive communist nation for the first time in six years with plans for further discussions in the next few months. Pascoe, who also met with Kim Yong-nam, the DPRK's No. 2 and president of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly, did not disclose details about plans for future talks, except saying that senior officials from either one or two U.N. agencies planned to visit Pyongyang.

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7. DPRK Leadership

Agence France-Presse ("SISTER OF N.KOREA LEADER 'WIELDING MORE POWER'", Seoul, 2010/02/17) reported that Kim Jong-Il's only sister appears to be wielding more power in the DPRK after making a comeback to the frontline of the regime last year, the ROK said Wednesday. Kim Kyong-Hui, 64, was newly added to a diagram of the DPRK's power structure released by the ROK's unification ministry after returning to the public spotlight for the first time in nearly six years. The annually updated diagram, which offers a glimpse into changes in the DPRK's elite power system, showed her heading an organ which oversees light industries under the ruling Workers' Party of Korea.

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8. DPRK Economy

Chosun Ilbo ("N.KOREANS ABANDON WORTHLESS WON FOR YUAN", 2010/02/17) reported that DPRK citizens in the border area with the PRC have abandoned the won since a shock currency reform, Internet broadcaster Open Radio for North Korea reported. The broadcaster quoted a DPRK source as saying DPRK banknotes are nothing but pieces of paper, and almost all goods are traded in yuan. "Not even cart pushers would accept won for their work," the source said.

Yonhap (Yejin Lee, "N. KOREA STRUGGLING IN CURRENCY EVALUATION AFTERMATH: SCHOLARS", Seoul, 2010/02/18) reported that the failure of the DPRK's currency revaluation has greatly damaged the endurance of the country's system, analysts said on Thursday. Baek Seung-joo, a DPRK researcher from the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses, during a debate held in the National Assembly under the title, "What is happening in North Korea?", argued, "They have not prepared detailed measures to take in case they face the after-effect of a possible failure." Baek explained that because the revaluation failed, "the moral bond that connected the North Korean leader to the people has been weakened." He also said that "whether or not North Korea will be able to maintain its system depends upon how North Koreans will change their political attitude."

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9. US-ROK Joint Military Exercise

Korea Herald ("S. KOREA, U.S. NOTIFY N.K. OF ANNUAL JOINT MILITARY DRILL", 2010/02/17) reported that the United States and the ROK will hold their annual joint military exercise next month, officials said Wednesday, according to Yonhap News. The Key Resolve and Foal Eagle exercise, slated for March 8-18, will draw 18,000 U.S. troops from bases here and abroad, slightly smaller than usual, Kim Yong-kyu, a Combined Forces Command (CFC) spokesman, told reporters. Seoul and Washington have "already informed the Korean People's Army about the exercise dates," the CFC said in a press release, adding the drill "is designed to improve the command's ability to defend" the ROK.

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10. US-ROK Missile Defense Cooperation

Korea Herald ("SEOUL OPEN TO TALKS ON MISSILE DEFENSE WITH U.S.", 2010/02/17) reported that the ROK is willing to discuss its participation in the US-led regional ballistic missile defense

system to deter a growing threat from the DPRK, a senior defense official was quoted as saying. The US Department of Defense said this month that the ROK is an important US BMD partner and the two sides are discussing the missile defense cooperation in a bilateral framework. The official said defense research institutes from the two countries have exchanged opinions about possible BMD cooperation. But there were no formal talks between the two governments, he added.

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11. US-ROK Trade Relations

RTTNews ("SOUTH KOREA-US FTA TO BENEFIT BOTH THE NATIONS, SAYS TOP OFFICIAL", 2010/02/17) reported that the proposed free trade deal between the ROK and the United States is likely to benefit the economies of both the countries, a top ROK official said Wednesday. Speaking at a luncheon in Seoul hosted by the American Chamber of Commerce in Korea, ROK Ambassador to the U.S. Han Duck-soo said he did not subscribe to the view that the trade deal would lead job loss and become deeply unpopular. He urged for an early ratification of the Free Trade Agreement which he said offered unprecedented opportunity for American workers and farmers.

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12. ROK, Japan, PRC Trade Relations

Xinhua News ("CHINA, S KOREA, JAPAN TO LAUNCH JOINT STUDY ON TRILATERAL FREE TRADE DEAL ", Seoul, 2010/02/17) reported that the ROK plans to launch a joint research with the PRC and Japan on the feasibility of a free trade agreement (FTA) among the three Northeast Asian countries, the ROK's foreign ministry said. According to a report by the ministry will kick off a joint study with the countries, in which government officials, scholars and business representatives will participate. Along with the trilateral FTA, the country will also continue to push for settling separate bilateral trade agreements with the PRC and Japan, the ministry said in the report.

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13. Japan-ROK Territorial Dispute

Korea Times ("EAST SEA, NOT SEA OF JAPAN", 2010/02/17) reported that the Northeast Asian History Foundation will exhibit historical maps that support the ROK's claim that the term "Sea of Japan" should be replaced with "East Sea" or "Sea of Korea." "The exhibition will shed new light on the contentious issue over the naming of the body of water between the Koreas and Japan," Shim Jeong-bo, a researcher at the foundation, said Wednesday. "The maps collected from Japan and Western countries show that these countries marked the contentious sea area as Korea's maritime territory in the early days," Shim said.

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14. USFJ Base Relocation

Kyodo ("HATOYAMA SAYS RELOCATION IDEAS PREVIOUSLY DROPPED 'WORTH' STUDYING ",

2010/02/17) reported that Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama said Wednesday it is still worth looking into relocation plans for the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Okinawa Prefecture even if they are among those dropped in the course of negotiations between the previous Japanese government led by the Liberal Democratic Party and the United States. "I believe it is still worth examining the ideas...which were not necessarily considered optimal during the LDP period," Hatoyama told reporters in the evening, adding it is not clear what was the reasoning behind the party's past decisions.

Kyodo News ("GUAM CALLS FOR TRANSFER OF U.S. MARINES FROM OKINAWA TO BE DELAYED", 2010/02/17) reported that the congresswoman who represents Guam in the U.S. House of Representatives said that the 2014 deadline for completing the planned transfer of about 8,000 U.S. Marines from Okinawa to the Pacific island should be delayed so that the island can better prepare for the upcoming surge in population. "One of the most troubling aspects of the draft environmental impact statement (for the military buildup on Guam) is that all assumptions are based on projects being completed by 2014," Democrat Madeleine Bordallo said in an address to Guam's legislature. "This flawed assumption has drawn consequences and conclusions that are not sustainable and not supported by anyone," Bordallo said.

Kyodo ("MAYOR ASKS PM TO GIVE UP BASE RELOCATION TO NAGO", Tokyo, 2010/02/18) reported that Susumu Inamine, mayor of Nago, Okinawa Prefecture, asked Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama on Thursday to give up on a plan to relocate the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station to his city from Ginowan. "I told him that I won the (mayoral) election on the promises I had made on the Futenma relocation, and asked him to understand that well as the popular will," Inamine said. He said he also expressed his opposition to a plan pushed by the People's New Party, one of the junior coalition partners in Hatoyama's government, to build a new airfield at the Marines' Camp Schwab in Nago without sea reclamation.

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15. Japan Energy Supply

The Asahi Shimbun ("DEREGULATION EYED FOR GEOTHERMAL POWER", 2010/02/17) reported that the government is considering lifting regulations that have hindered efforts to tap into Japan's abundant but underused geothermal resources to generate renewable energy. The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry hopes that lifting various requirements will promote research into geothermal power and encourage companies other than utilities to develop the green energy.

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16. Japan Environment

Kyodo ("GOV'T DRAFT REPORT SAYS JAPAN'S BIODIVERSITY 'DAMAGED OVERALL'", 2010/02/17) reported that a government panel compiled a draft report Wednesday stating that biodiversity in Japan has been "damaged overall" by economic development and the situation continues to deteriorate, an outlook indicating that the country is unlikely to meet its goal of curbing declines in biodiversity under an international treaty. The first-ever comprehensive evaluation of the country's biodiversity, compiled by a panel of experts at the Environment Ministry, said marine, coastal and island ecosystems have seen dramatic declines in biodiversity in the last 50 years and are on course

to suffer further losses.

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17. Japan Whaling Issue

Bernama ("AUSTRALIA FM TO DISCUSS WHALING ACTIVITIES WITH JAPAN", 2010/02/17) reported that Australian Foreign Minister Stephen Smith revealed on Wednesday that he will discuss Japan's whaling fleet activities with Japanese Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada during his visit to Australia this weekend. "During our meeting I will discuss whaling, and current diplomatic efforts both in the International Whaling Commission and bilaterally," Smith said in a statement.

Associated Press (Kristen Gelineau, "WHALERS, ACTIVISTS CLASH AGAIN IN ANTARCTIC WATERS", Sydney, 2010/02/18) reported that a group of conservationists threw bottles of butyric acid at Japanese whalers and blasted their ship with paint balls, while the Japanese fired water cannons in their latest Antarctic Ocean clash, both sides said Thursday. No one was injured in Wednesday's confrontation.

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18. Sino-US Relations

Agence France-Presse ("US AIRCRAFT CARRIER IN HONG KONG AMID TENSION", Hong Kong, 2010/02/17) reported that a US aircraft carrier arrived in Hong Kong Wednesday amid heightened tension between Washington and Beijing. The stop by the USS Nimitz, one of the world's largest warships, came only weeks after the PRC said it would suspend military and security contacts with the United States over Washington's 6.4-billion-dollar arms package for Taipei. Rear Admiral John Miller, commander of the carrier, said the PRC and the United States could work together on areas such as maritime security even if they did not agree on other issues. Asked about the significance of the port call amid simmering Sino-US tension, Miller said: "For us, this is a routine port visit. I don't know (if) this is any different from any other visit we have made."

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19. Cross-Strait Relations

Agence France-Presse ("TAIWAN TO CHALLENGE CHINA'S 'SOFT POWER'", 2010/02/17) reported that Taipei plans to establish a string of "Taiwan Academies" around the world in a race with Beijing to promote traditional Chinese language and culture, an official said Wednesday. President Ma Ying-jeou has told the Cabinet-level Council for Cultural Affairs to work out a plan for the academies, his spokesman said, in what could become a new competition about the spread of "soft power" abroad. "Ma ordered the council to draft the plan as soon as possible... so that traditional Chinese language and culture can be preserved and spread around the world," presidential office spokesman Wang Yu-chi told AFP.

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20. PRC Tibet Issue

Financial Times ("BEIJING BETS ON ECONOMY TO STABILISE TIBET", 2010/02/17) reported that nearly two years after Tibetan regions of the PRC were engulfed in riots and protests, Beijing is doubling its bet that rapid economic development will win the political loyalty of its Tibetan population. In a meeting of the PRC's top leaders last month to discuss Tibet, the government pledged that "leapfrog" economic progress over the next decade would bring stability to the region. Yet as the Dalai Lama prepares to meet Barack Obama, Tibet experts are deciphering the outcome of the policy summit to see if Beijing has also made subtle changes to its approach, which reflect some of the criticisms it has received at home and abroad.

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