NAPSNet Daily Report 18 September, 2008

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report 18 September, 2008", NAPSNet Daily Report, September 18, 2008, https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-18-september-2008/

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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. ROK Energy Aid to the DPRK

Joongang Ilbo (Jung Ha-won , "PYONGYANG ASKS SEOUL FOR MEETING", 2008/09/17) reported that despite the recent tension over its leader Kim Jong-il's health, Pyongyang proposed that Seoul meet representatives from the DPRK for their first direct talks since a June meeting in Beijing. "Major agenda items will include the scheduled fuel oil and other economic aid and other obligations for both sides to complete the second phase (of the North's three-step denuclearization process)," said the Foreign Ministry.

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2. Inter-Korean Relations

Korea Herald (Lee Joo-hee, "N.K. REQUESTS DELAY OF CIVIC GROUP VISIT", 2008/09/17) reported that the DPRK has asked a humanitarian aid group from the ROK to delay its visit, organizers said. The DPRK side sent a facsimile to "Peace 3000," which stated, "We have no choice but to delay the visit as we have lacked time to prepare, having been busy preparing for the 60th anniversary of the country and Chuseok holiday." The DPRK warned against speculation in its message to Peace 3000. "Should the South's side make noise with erroneous speculation, it will not only discourage the people's reconciliation and unity but also face grave consequences."

Yonhap News ("SEOUL HANDS OVER BODY OF N. KOREAN SOLDIER FOUND IN RIVER ", Seoul, 2008/09/17) reported that the ROK handed over the body of a DPRK soldier found here earlier this month to the DPRK who agreed to receive it through the joint security area, the Defense Ministry said. The soldier's corpse, clad in a DPRK army uniform, was found Sept. 2 in the Imjin River that intersects the two Koreas. It will be handed over by the United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission (UNCMAC), which oversees the armistice between the two Koreas.

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3. US Food Aid to the DPRK

Korea Times (Michael Ha, "WASHINGTON PLANS NEW AID SHIPMENT TO PYONGYANG", 2008/09/17) reported that the US is going ahead with its next food aid shipment to the DPRK despite lingering concerns about monitoring problems in aid distribution in the reclusive regime, according to a report. Radio Free Asia (RFA) said that the US government has begun loading some 30,000 tons of food aid to be shipped to the DPRK. This is the fifth installment of U.S. aid to the DPRK. In all, American food aid is expected to total some 500,000 tons.

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4. DPRK Food Supply

Radio Australia ("CHINA REPORTS GRAIN SMUGGLING BUSINESS ACTIVE INTO NORTH KOREA", 2008/09/17) reported that a PRC official says a corn shortage in the DPRK and a bumper harvest across the border in the PRC have triggered an active grain smuggling business. The head of the grains bureau of Jilin, the PRC province bordering the DPRK, Zhu Yehui, says a drought in the DPRK is very serious, and there is a lot of corn smuggling from the PRC into the DPRK. He says the price in the DPRK is more than 10 times the domestic price in the PRC.

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5. DPRK Leadership

The Associated Press (Hyung-Jin Kim, "S. KOREAN PM CURBS INTELLIGENCE LEAKS ON N. KOREA", Seoul, 2008/09/17) reported that the ROK's prime minister ordered top officials Wednesday to stop disclosing intelligence on the DPRK unnecessarily amid rampant speculation over leader Kim Jong Il's health, an official said. "Political uncertainty inside North Korea has increased due to reports on Kim Jong Il's health problem and the people and the entire world have been curious" about the issue, Prime Minister Han Seung-soo said during a weekly Cabinet meeting in Seoul.

Agence-France-Presse ("KIM'S CHINESE DOCTORS STILL IN NKOREA: REPORT ", Seoul, 2008/09/17) reported that PRC army doctors sent to the DPRK after leader Kim Jong-Il suffered a stroke are still in the country a month later, a ROK newspaper said. JoongAng Ilbo, quoting a Seoul intelligence official, said this could indicate Kim's condition is still serious or it could be an attempt to stop them leaking information about his health.

Yonhap News (Shim Sun-ah, "PRO-PYONGYANG DAILY DENIES ALLEGATIONS OF KIM'S ILLNESS ", Seoul, 2008/09/17) reported that the daily of a Japan-based pro-Pyongyang group denied rumors of DPRK leader Kim Jong-il's health problems on Wednesday, claiming the DPRK's news media refrained from covering Kim's public activities due to high tensions on the Korean Peninsula. "There have been times when the supreme leader's activities have not been made public through news media for certain periods when confrontation between the DPRK and the United States has intensified and tension has risen on the peninsula," Choson Sinbo reported.

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6. Sino-ROK Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("FORGE CLOSER TIES WITH CHINA: SENIOR N.K. DEFECTOR", 2008/09/17) reported that Hwang Jang-yup, a former secretary of the DPRK Worker's Party who fled to the ROK in 1997, reportedly said on Tuesday if Seoul had a free trade agreement with Beijing, the PRC would not recklessly interfere if the DPRK collapses. He said the PRC is chiefly interested in economic profits. Hwang pointed out that the PRC holds the key to all North Korean issues, so if Seoul and Beijing grow closer after concluding an FTA, it could be possible to persuade the DPRK to open up and reform in the way the PRC has.

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7. DPRK Economy

Donga Ilbo ("WHO WILL CONTROL N. KOREA`S WEALTH AFTER KIM JONG IL? ", 2008/09/17) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong Il has ruled his communist country with guns and dollars, experts say. For that reason, who will control the economy in Kim`s absence is attracting attention. Kim Gwang-jin, a senior researcher at the Institute for National Security Strategy in Seoul, said, “The operation of the Workers` Party economy and the military economy will be taken up by the deputy chief of departments in the party, Jang Song Taek, and Kim’s personal funds will be taken care of by his wife and secretary Kim Ok.”

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8. DPRK Cultural Events

Xinhua News ("PYONGYANG INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL OPENS", Pyongyang, 2008/09/17) reported that the 11th Pyongyang International Film Festival was inaugurated Wednesday at the capital city of the DPRK. A total of 29 feature and documentary films from over 40 countries will compete for the "torch prize" of the film festival. More than 110 films will be screened during the festival. "The Pyongyang International Film Festival has contributed to the international friendship and the development of the world film industry," said Kang Nung Su, Minister of Culture, in the opening ceremony. He wished the festival to be more characteristic and influential.

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9. US-ROK Security Alliance

Yonhap (Kim Boram , "EXPERT CALLS FOR REDUCTION OF SEOUL'S BURDEN FOR U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE", Seoul, 2008/09/17) reported that a ROK civic activist insisted Seoul should pay less for maintaining U.S. military troops here, claiming they serve partly to protect Washington's own interests. "South Korea is not the only beneficiary of the South Korea-U.S. alliance," said Park Jeong-eun, a disarmament expert from People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy. Park's argument to reduce Seoul's burden is largely in line with the demand of other civic activists who say the U.S. military presence is not only aimed at protecting the country from the DPRK, but that it is also -- if not mostly -- aimed at protecting U.S. commercial interests in northeast Asia.

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10. ROK Military

Joongang Ilbo (Kim Jung-ha and Jung Ha-won, "MILITARY ASKS HISTORY BE REWRITTEN IN TEXTBOOKS", 2008/09/17) reported that the ROK's Defense Ministry has requested that the Education Ministry revise its modern history textbooks to recast some chapters that criticize the nation's past military dictatorship or the United States, it was revealed yesterday. The current textbooks state the military regime under former President Chun Doo Hwan "staged oppressive politics based on military power." The ministry asked that Chun's government be described as "forced to take several measures to curb activities of some left-wing groups, who, under the name of democracy, were friendly toward North Korea."

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11. US-Japan Missile Defense Cooperation

Kyodo News ("JAPAN SHOOTS DOWN 'BALLISTIC' MISSILE IN INTERCEPTOR TEST ", White Sands, 2008/09/17) reported that Japan's Air Self-Defense Force successfully shot down a mock ballistic missile in Japan's first test of a US-developed land-to-air missile interception system since the country started deploying it late last year, ASDF officials said. The firing of two Patriot Advanced Capability-3 interceptors the ASDF said was a success marked the end of a series of tests on key capabilities of a nearly 1 trillion yen missile shield Japan is trying to complete by around fiscal 2010.

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12. US Military in Japan

Bloomberg News (Stuart Biggs, "JAPAN RADICAL GROUP CLAIMS IT ATTACKED U.S. BASE, TV ASAHI SAYS ", 2008/09/17) reported that a Japanese radical group claimed responsibility for two blasts near a U.S. naval base last week, Japan's TV Asahi reported on its Web site, without saying where it obtained the information. The group, identifying itself as a ``revolutionary army,'' said in a letter sent to media organizations it aimed to obstruct the deployment of the nuclear-powered USS George Washington aircraft carrier, which will arrive in Japan this month, according to the report.

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13. US-Japan Security Alliance

Kyodo News ("U.S. NAVY ASSURES JAPAN OF NUKE CARRIER SAFETY AHEAD OF ARRIVAL", 2008/09/17) reported that the top US official in charge of nuclear-powered vessels reiterated a promise to Japan to ensure the safety of nuclear aircraft carrier George Washington, which is scheduled to arrive at its new home port of Yokosuka, Kanagawa Prefecture, next week, the Japanese Foreign Ministry said. Adm. Kirkland Donald, director of U.S. Naval Nuclear Propulsion, gave the assurance in response to Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura's request to once again confirm the safety of US nuclear-powered vessels amid continued concerns among Yokosuka residents and others in the Japanese public.

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14. Japan SDF Indian Ocean Refueling Mission

Yomiuri Shimbun (Yoshikazu Shirakawa, "U.N. TO HAIL MARITIME MISSION OFF AFGHANISTAN", 2008/09/17) reported that a draft U.N. Security Council resolution to extend the International Security Assistance Force mission in Afghanistan for another year will express gratitude for the maritime interdiction activities in which the Maritime Self-Defense Force has participated. The resolution is expected to state that the maritime interdiction activities should be conducted within the framework of the antiterrorism operation in Afghanistan, as well as to make it clear that the activities should not be used for any other purposes, including the war in Iraq.

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15. Japan Politics

The New York Times ("POPULIST APPEALS IN ELECTION, AND CLAIMS OF POLITICAL THEATER ", Tokyo, 2008/09/16) reported that the LDP would seem to have departed drastically from back-room politics as usual. It is parading its five candidates on street corners and live television, where they have issued ringing calls for change. But it is not clear that the push for change is anything more than a show. The overwhelming favorite in the party vote on Monday is the same politician the experts named as the likely winner months before the campaign began: the insiders' candidate, Taro Aso, a hawkish former foreign minister. That has led many here to wonder whether the whole campaign has just been a skillful exercise in political Kabuki, an effort to make the anointed winner, Mr. Aso, look like one in front of voters in the general election.

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16. Sino-Japanese Military Relations

Kyodo News ("JAPAN DEFENSE CHIEF, CHINA AIR FORCE HEAD AGREE TO BOOST EXCHANGES", Tokyo, 2008/09/17) reported that Japanese Defense Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi and PRC air force chief Gen. Xu Qiliang agreed Wednesday that there is a need to enhance bilateral defense exchanges, a Japanese Defense Ministry official said. Xu, the first commander of the People's Liberation Army Air Force to visit Japan since 2001, was quoted as telling Hayashi, "It's important to build mutual confidence deepening understanding through various exchange programs."

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17. Cross Strait Relations

Kyodo News ("U.S. COMMITTED TO DEFENDING TAIWAN, DIPLOMAT SAYS", Hong Kong , 2008/09/17) reported that U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte said the United States is committed to defending Taiwan, but he made no mention about a months-long freeze on sales of major weapons systems to Taiwan. "There has not been any recent sales of arms, but there had been in the past and there may well be in the future," Negroponte told reporters in Hong Kong, on the last leg of a nine-day Asia tour. "We are committed to conducting defense relations with Taiwan under the Taiwan Relations Act and that continues to be our policy," he said.

Ta Kung Pao ("BOTH SIDES OF TAIWAN STRAIT JOIN HANDS IN EXPLOITING DIAOYU ISLANDS' RESOURCES", 2008/09/17) reported that a few days ago two major energy enterprises in the PRC and Taiwan decided to join hands in prospecting for and exploiting oil and gas resources in the PRC's Diaoyu Islands waters. This move marks the rise of cross-Strait energy cooperation to a new height and also deals a heavy blow to some Japanese energy experts' wild ambition to encroach on the energy resources at the PRC's Diaoyu Islands. The second meeting between Chiang Ping-kun, chairman of Taiwan's "Strait Exchange Foundation," and Chen Yunlin, president of the mainland's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait, is expected to start at the end of October. The two sides of the Taiwan Strait will sign a cooperation agreement on jointly carrying out oil resources extraction overseas, at the Diaoyu Islands, and in the Taiwan Strait.

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18. Sino-US Trade Relations

Agence-France-Presse (Veronica Smith , "US, CHINA INK TRADE DEALS AFTER BILATERAL TALKS ", 2008/09/17) reported that the US and PRC announced Tuesday a raft of trade agreements at the end of bilateral trade talks amid a faltering US economy buffeted by a financial crisis. US Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez highlighted the PRC's agreements to commit to a single set of standards on a range of health-care products and work more closely with the US to prevent contaminated pharmaceutical ingredients. The PRC agreed to make a "stepped-up effort" to control against contamination and "make sure these products don't get exported," he said.

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19. PRC Protests

The International Herald Tribune (Edward Wong, "WOULD-BE PROTESTERS STILL DETAINED IN CHINA", Beijing, 2008/09/17) reported that eleven people who came to Beijing last week to protest property issues in southern PRC are still being held by the police in or around their hometown, a sister of one of the protesters said Wednesday. Some of the detainees, who include an ailing 79-yea--old woman and a 4-month-old baby, have been beaten by the police, the sister said. The detainees are from the industrial city of Liuzhou, in Guangxi Autonomous Region, and they have been held by local police since Sept. 10, when they were arrested in Beijing before they had a chance to carry out any protests.

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II. PRC Report

20. PRC Environment

Economic Reference News ("ENVIRONMENTAL TAX POLICY IS UNDER JOINT RESEARCH", 2008/09/16) reported that “Currently, the Environmental Protection Ministry is developing an environmental tax policy with other sectors and the joint research work has been started.” said by Pan Yue, Vice Minister of Environmental Protection, at the 14th Green China Forum. Pan said, to the units or individuals who develop, protect and use the environmental resources, the Government will collect or remit their environmental taxes according to the degree of developing, polluting, destroying and protecting the environmental resources. The implementation plan will be made following this.

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21. PRC Internet

China Network ("CHINA INTERNET ASSOCIATION PROPOSES PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN “2008 INTERNET INTERNATIONAL CLEAN DAY"", 2008/09/16) reported that with the rapid development of the PRC’s Internet Industry, shopping online has become the one of the basic ways of consuming. But at the same time, it has been the main channels for the spread of bad information and to carry out fraudulent conduct. So China Internet Association proposes that the public participate in “2008 Internet International Clean Day”. Network operators and website service providers should clean the false advertising information on their own website, and the mass net citizen should strength supervision and awareness of information on the internet.

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22. PRC Public Health

People’s Daily online ("69 BATCHES OF BABY MILK POWDER PRODUCED BY 22 COMPANIES CHECKED WITH CHEMICAL MELAMINE", 2008/09/16) reported that PRC inspectors have found the chemical melamine in 69 batches of baby milk powder produced by 22 companies nationwide, the country's quality watchdog said late on Tuesday. The authorities ordered a halt to the sale of the tainted products which included such well-known brands as Sanlu, Mengniu, Yili and Yashili, among others. The State Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) said test samples came from 491 batches of products sold by all the 109 companies that produced the baby milk powder in the country.

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III. ROK Report

23. Inter-Korea Relations

Seoul Shinmun ("PRIVATE DPRK VISITING, BE THE INITIATE OFRELEASING A TIGHT INTER-KOREA", 2008/09/17) reported that the government's basic policy toward the DPRK shows signs of change. The Unification Ministry has a policy to allow 19 private organizations to visiting the DPRK. Now it is up to the DPRK to accept or decline those visits. It is time for the ROK Government to to make decisions regarding DPRK food aid as well.

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24. ROK Contingency Planning for DPRK

Tongilnews ("CAREFUL MODE OF UNIFICATION MINISTRY", 2008/09/16) reported that remors about Kim Jong-il's failing health from the NIS and Blue House have been leaked despite the Unification Ministry's 'Careful Mode' policy. This would seem to demonstrate that intra-governmental communication and coordinated action has not been effective. Careless leaks of information from the NIS and Blue House could be a problem. If their intelligence was found out to be false the present government could be affected seriously, in addition to the intelligence agencies. It need to be watched how Unification Ministry's Careful Mode will impact to status of the Unification Ministry in the government.

PRESSian (Jung Yong-Chul, the director of the Contemporary History Institute, "GOVERNMENT-CONSERVATIVE MEDIA COLLABORATING IRONY, CRISIS MAKING GOVERNMENT AND CRISIS NURTURING MEDIA, WITHI SERIOUS ILLNESS RUMOR OFKIM JONG-IL, PEONGYANG 'DESERTED', SEOUL 'MEASLES'", 2008/09/17) reported that prudence and cool-headedness are required in matters related to the DPRK. The attitude that our government has shown recently is concerning in various ways. Developing the inter-Korean relationship is the only way to resolove the crisis without making it worse.

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