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I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK on Nuclear Talks

Associated Press (Kwang-tae Kim, "NKOREA VOWS TO BOLSTER NUCLEAR FORCE AS DETERRENT", Seoul, 2010/02/19) reported that the DPRK vowed Friday to bolster its nuclear force unless the United States dropped its hostile policy. The DPRK's " nuclear deterrent for self-defense will remain as ever and grow more powerful ... as long as the U.S. nuclear threat and hostile policy persist," the Korean Central News Agency said in a dispatch from Pyongyang. The DPRK's "dismantlement of its nuclear weapons can never happen ... unless the hostile policy towards the DPRK is rolled back and the nuclear threat to it removed."

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2. DPRK Earthquake

Bloomberg News (Bomi Lim and Stuart Biggs, "MAGNITUDE 6.9 QUAKE HITS NORTH KOREA'S NORTH BORDER", 2010/02/18) reported that a 6.9-magnitude earthquake struck close to the DPRK's northeastern border with the PRC and Russia today. The temblor's depth indicated it was unlikely to have caused extensive damage or been triggered by an explosion. The quake, within Russian territory, occurred at 10:13 a.m. local time, 100 kilometers (60 miles) northeast of DPRK's Chongjin at a depth of 573.8 kilometers, the U.S. Geological Survey said on its Web site. There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage.

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3. Russia on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Yonhap News (Hwang Doo-hyong, "RUSSIA PREFERS STATUS QUO IN N. KOREAN NUKE TO INSTABILITY: SCHOLAR", Washington, 2010/02/18) reported that Russia prefers the status quo in the DPRK nuclear issue to any contingency in the impoverished, nuclear armed communist state that could destabilize the Russian Far East, a scholar said Thursday. "A key issue is reconciling the sometimes conflicting stances of Russia and the United States regarding how best to realize their common goals," Richard Weitz, senior fellow and director of the Center for Political-Military Analysis at the Hudson Institute, told a seminar at the Korea Economic Institute.

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4. US on DPRK Stability

The Korea Times (Kim Sue-young, "'US ISN'T PREPARED FOR LIFE AFTER KIM JONG-IL'", 2010/02/18) reported that the United States appears to be unprepared for a possible power vacuum after DPRK leader Kim Jong-il dies, a professor said in his contributions to Foreign Policy Magazine. Lee Sung-yoon, who teaches at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, said a continued U.S. commitment is necessary to ensure stability on the Korean Peninsula. Some DPRK watchers said that it would be possible to witness a sudden change in the leadership of the reclusive regime or a father-to-son succession as Kim weakens. Professor Lee viewed that it will take decades and require the sustained help of various international organizations and financial institutions to reorient DPRK society.

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5. DPRK Artillery Firings

Yonhap ("N. KOREA AGAIN DESIGNATES 'NAVAL FIRING ZONES' ALONG SEA BORDER", Seoul, 2010/02/19) reported that the DPRK temporarily designated six regions along its maritime border with the ROK as "naval firing zones," a government Web site said Friday. The DPRK has unilaterally notified the ROK it will conduct artillery fire drills in four areas in the Yellow Sea and two areas in the East Sea for three days from Saturday, Seoul's National Oceanographic Research Institute said on its Web site.

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6. ROK on Inter-Korea Relations

The Korea Times (Na Jeong-ju, "N. KOREA URGED TO BE OPEN WIDER TO TALKS", 2010/02/18) reported that a presidential secretary for inter-Korean relations called on the DPRK Thursday to resume dialogue with the ROK to discuss solutions to the economic crisis and to ensure political stability there. "Pyongyang should have an open mind on talks with Seoul because only the latter can help it rebuild its economy and ease security concerns," Kim Sung-hwan, senior presidential secretary for diplomatic and security issues, said. "We are always open to talks with Pyongyang. However, the inter-Korean ties will only improve when DPRK shows sincere efforts to resolve the nuclear issue," Kim said during a luncheon meeting hosted by the European Union Chamber of Commerce in Korea (EUCCK) at the Lotte Hotel in central Seoul.

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7. Inter-Korea Economic Cooperation

The Korea Herald (Kim So-hyun, "SEOUL NOT READY FOR N.K. FORESTATION", 2010/02/19) reported that the envisioned forestation project in DPRK, one of the Lee Myung-bak administration's key policy objectives, is still far from being realized as Seoul has no plans to discuss it with DPRK yet. A DPRK point man on ROK had sought to meet with Seoul's head of a presidential panel to

discuss the tree planting plan among others, but Seoul turned down the request.

JoongAng Daily ("INTER-KOREAN TRADE UP DESPITE TENSIONS", 2010/02/19) reported that trade between ROK and DPRK showed steep growth last month despite political tensions between the divided nations, a government report showed yesterday. According to the report by the Korea Customs Service, inter-Korean trade soared 52.1 percent from a year ago to \$169.37 million in January. By region, Seoul accounted for 50.8 percent of total trade. The ROK's trade deficit with the DPRK also reached \$9.55 million, the report said. In December 2009, ROK posted a surplus of \$23.91 million from its trade with the DPRK for the first time in 16 months amid the global economic crisis.

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8. US-ROK Joint Military Exercise

Agence France-Presse ("S.KOREA, US TO SCALE DOWN MILITARY DRILL", Seoul, 2010/02/18) reported that the US and ROK will go ahead next month with a major annual military exercise set to anger the DPRK but fewer US troops than last year will take part, officials said. The Key Resolve and Foal Eagle exercise, slated for March 8-18, will draw 18,000 US troops including 10,000 stationed in ROK and 8,000 from abroad, said Combined Forces Command spokesman Kim Yong-Kyu. Some 26,000 US troops took part in the exercise last year. "An aircraft carrier which came last year will not participate this time," the spokesman said, adding that the scaling-down of the exercise was governed only by operational considerations.

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9. ROK Military

Yonhap News ("S. KOREA'S SECOND AEGIS DESTROYER CLOSE TO OPERATION: OFFICIALS", 2010/02/18) reported that the ROK's second Aegis destroyer will go into operation by August this year with nearly 70 percent of examinations complete as of now, officials said. "Test operations for the ship will be complete by the end of May and the ship will be transferred to the Navy and be operational by August," an official at Seoul's Defense Acquisition Program Administration said. The KDX-III ship is the core of the ROK Navy's so-called "strategic mobile squadrons" consisting of 14,000 large-deck landing platforms, 4,500-ton KDX-II destroyers, 1,800-ton Type 214 submarines, frigates and anti-submarine Lynx helicopters.

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10. ROK-EU Trade Relations

Yonhap News ("S. KOREA-EU FTA TO BEEF UP BILATERAL ECONOMIC TIES: PRESIDENTIAL AIDE", Seoul, 2010/02/18) reported that a free trade deal between ROK and the European Union (EU) will play a key role in enhancing bilateral economic cooperation, a top aide to President Lee Myung-bak said Thursday. "The EU is one of ROK's very important partners. The ROK-EU free trade deal will play a decisive role in strengthening bilateral economic cooperation," said Kim Sung-hwan, the top presidential adviser on security issues.

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11. US-ROK Trade Relations

Yonhap News ("U.S. TO SEEK PROPER TIME FOR KOREA FTA'S RATIFICATION: KIRK", 2010/02/18) reported that the Obama administration will present the pending free trade agreements with the ROK, Colombia and Panama to Congress for ratification at an appropriate time after resolving outstanding issues, the chief US trade negotiator said. US Trade Representative Ron Kirk, however, fell short of elaborating on when to submit the deals for ratification.

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12. Japan-ROK Territorial Dispute

The Chosun Ilbo ("MORE MAPS WEAKEN JAPAN'S CLAIM TO DOKDO", 2010/02/18) reported that yet another couple of historic Japanese maps have been discovered that do not include Korea's Dokdo islets as part of Japanese territory. Yuji Hosaka, a Japanese professor at Sejong University, unveiled them at a press conference at the Northeast Asian History Foundation on Wednesday. Measuring 115 cm by 123 cm, one map was produced by the Japanese Army in 1877 and depicts the country's sovereign territory in detail, but does not contain Dokdo. Park Jin-hyun, head of the foundations' Dokdo Research Institute said, "This shows Japan's claim that Dokdo was Japanese territory prior to 1905 is false."

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13. Japan Defense

Kyodo News ("NEW PANEL MULLS NEW SECURITY PARAMETERS", 2010/02/18) reported that a newly set-up government panel began discussing basic defense policies Thursday, ultimately aiming to revise the National Defense Program Guideline before year's end. Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, who was present at the first meeting of defense experts and academics, urged the members to hold open and free discussions. He listed examples of security issues, including the DPRK's missile and nuclear threat and development of arms and the modernization of military capabilities of "neighboring countries" as well as how Japan can participate in the international community in fields like U.N. peacekeeping operations, disaster relief activities and antiterrorism.

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14. USFJ Base Relocation

Agence France-Presse ("US OPEN TO OPTIONS IN JAPAN BASE ROW: DIPLOMAT", 2010/02/18) reported that the US is ready to face "a variety of different possibilities" in talks with Japan on where to relocate a contentious US military base, its top diplomat for Asia was quoted as saying. The top US diplomat, in an interview with a Japanese newspaper, said Washington still wants Tokyo to honour the original plan to move the base to Okinawa's coastal Henoko, but signalled it is open to negotiations. "Again, our preference is for the current plan to go forward, but we are prepared to face a variety of different possibilities going forward," said Kurt Campbell .

Mainichi Shimbun ("MARINE COMMANDER NEGATIVE ON GUAM HOSTING ALL OKINAWA MARINES", 2010/02/18) reported that a top US Marine Corps commander struck a negative note about the idea that Guam could host all the Marines based in Okinawa, suggesting it would reduce response capability in the event of a contingency in the region near Japan. "Guam is not a substitute for Okinawa...Guam is twice as far or more away from some of the critical areas and regions" near Okinawa, Stalder told Kyodo News. Marines in Okinawa must deal with security and disaster contingencies as "the only forward deployed available US ground force between Hawaii and India," he said, citing situations in East Asia such as the PRC's military buildup and the DPRK's missile development.

Associated Press (Eric Talmadge, "US MARINE GENERAL SAYS OKINAWA TROOPS NOT A BURDEN", Tokyo, 2010/02/19) reported that Lieutenant General Keith Stalder, commander of the U.S. Marine Corps Forces Pacific, said the Marines on Okinawa play a key role in securing the region from threats such as the DPRK. "I'm frequently concerned when I hear the word burden used as a description," Stalder said. "I suggest that it is an obligation under the alliance to do the hosting and basing of U.S. forces. And for that, the government of Japan gets the services of one of the best and biggest militaries in the world."

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15. Japan Politics

The Asahi Shimbun ("DPJ BLOC GAINS UPPER HOUSE MAJORITY", 2010/02/17) reported that a parliamentary group led by the Democratic Party of Japan on Wednesday clinched a majority in the Upper House, which will enable it to pass bills without support from the Social Democratic Party, a junior coalition partner. Gotaro Yoshimura, an Upper House member who left the Liberal Democratic Party, joined the People's New Party, a junior coalition partner and a member of the DPJ-led parliamentary bloc.

Kyodo News ("HATOYAMA SAYS HE IS AGAINST RESTORING POLICY RESEARCH PANEL IN DPJ", Tokyo, 2010/02/18) reported that Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama said Thursday he is opposed to the idea of restoring a policy research panel in the ruling Democratic Party of Japan, stressing that the party should stick to its policy of concentrating policymaking power within the government, adding he believes that DPJ Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa agrees with him on that matter. But he noted that there should be forums where ruling party lawmakers are able to voice their opinions on policies. The premier's remarks came after some DPJ lawmakers Wednesday petitioned both Hatoyama and Ozawa for the policy research panel to be restored so that the opinions of rank-and-file lawmakers can be reflected in government policies.

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16. Japan Whaling Issue

Associated Press (Kristen Gelineau, "AUSTRALIA THREATENS JAPAN OVER WHALING PROGRAM", Sydney, 2010/02/19) reported that Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said Australia would prefer to use diplomatic means to persuade Japan to end its annual whale hunt. "If that fails, then we will initiate court action before the commencement of the whaling season in November 2010," he told the Seven Network. "That's the bottom line and we're very clear to the Japanese, that's what we intend to do."

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17. Sino-US Relations

Reuters (Matt Spetalnick, "OBAMA MEETS DALAI LAMA DESPITE CHINESE WARNING", Washington, 2010/02/18) reported that President Barack Obama hosted the Dalai Lama at the White House on Thursday, brushing aside PRC's warning that the talks with the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader could further damage strained Sino-US ties. Obama used his first presidential meeting with the Dalai Lama to press Beijing, which has faced international criticism for its Tibet policies, to preserve Tibet's identity and protect its people's human rights. Obama encouraged PRC and the Dalai Lama's envoys to keep up efforts to resolve their differences through negotiations and "agreed on the importance of a positive and cooperative relationship between the United States and PRC."

Agence France-Presse (Dan Martin, "CHINA SAYS OBAMA-DALAI TALKS 'SERIOUSLY HARM' US TIES", Beijing, 2010/02/19) reported that the PRC on Friday angrily protested at US President Barack Obama's meeting with the Dalai Lama. "The US action seriously interfered in Chinese internal affairs, seriously hurt the feelings of China's people and seriously harmed China-US relations," said a statement released by foreign ministry spokesman Ma Zhaoxu. Ma said the talks "grossly violated basic norms of international relations" and US pledges to respect PRC sovereignty, but he gave no details on any specific reprisals.

The Washington Times ("QDR SOFT ON CHINA", 2010/02/18) reported that the Pentagon deleted language expressing concerns about a future conflict with the PRC and dropped references to Beijing's missiles and anti-satellite threats from its major four-year strategy review release earlier this month. Pentagon spokesman Geoff Morrell defended the softening of language that was contained in an unofficial Dec. 3 draft of the Quadrennial Defense Review, known as the QDR. Mr. Morrell said that any previous versions of the QDR were "staff-level documents" that lacked "senior leader input or approval."

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18. Cross-Strait Relations

Taiwan News ("U.S. ARMS SALES TO TAIWAN IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH CHINA: PRESIDENT MA YING-JEOU", Taipei, 2010/02/17) reported that United States arms sales to Taiwan help to improve the island's relations with PRC, President Ma Ying-jeou told a visiting Congressman Wednesday. He told Republican Jim Sensenbrenner that Washington's recent approval of a US\$6.4 billion arms package for Taiwan not only safeguarded the country's security, but also promoted a peaceful dialogue with PRC because stable Taiwan-U.S. relations were closely linked to the harmony of the environment between Taiwan and PRC. Ma said his efforts to improve relations with PRC had also improved mutual trust between Washington and Taipei.

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19. Sino-Indian Relations

The New York Times ("CHINA INTENSIFIES TUG OF WAR WITH INDIA ON NEPAL", 2010/02/17) reported that Nepal's home minister, Bhim Rawal, met with the PRC's top security officials, PRC state media reported that the two countries had agreed to cooperate on border security, while Nepal restated its commitment to preventing any "anti-China" events on its side of the border. In the broadest sense, India and the PRC share similar goals in Nepal. "India has always been concerned about what access China might have in Nepal," said Sridhar Khatri, executive director of the South Asia Center for Policy Studies in Katmandu. "India has always considered South Asia to be its backyard, like a Monroe Doctrine."

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20. PRC Nuclear Power

Xinhua News ("CHINA ADVANCES IN INDEPENDENTLY TAPPING NUCLEAR POWER", 2010/02/18) reported that in 2009, the PRC was putting an independently innovated third-generation nuclear power technology from dream into reality: It set to produce three of the four scheduled generating units with the world's most advanced pressurized water reactor (PWR) technology (AP1000) introduced from Westinghouse Electric Corporation of the United States. Based on these projects, the PRC kicked off developing its independently innovated nuclear power technology, known as CAP1400.

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