NAPSNet Daily Report 19 March, 2009

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report 19 March, 2009", NAPSNet Daily Report, March 19, 2009, https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-19-march-2009/

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Preceding NAPSNet Report

MARKTWO

I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Nuclear Program

Kyodo News ("N. KOREA SEEKS LIGHT-WATER REACTORS IN EXCHANGE FOR NUKE VERIFICATION", 2009/03/18) reported that the DPRK asked PRC Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei last month for the provision of light-water reactors to the country as a condition for accepting a comprehensive verification procedure over its nuclear activities, sources close to the six-party denuclearization talks said. The request was made when Wu, chairman of the six-way talks, visited the DPRK in February to seek a breakthrough in the multilateral negotiations.

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2. DPRK on Six Party Talks

Yonhap News ("6-PARTY TALKS TO BREAK DOWN IF U.S. SANCTIONS N. KOREA OVER ROCKET: REPORT", Seoul, 2009/03/18) reported that DPRK will reject the six-party denuclearization talks should the Barack Obama administration sanction it over its rocket launch, a pro-Pyongyang newspaper hinted. However, the DPRK is ready to respond if the U.S. proposes dialogue, said the Choson Sinbo, a Tokyo-based paper that conveys the DPRK's position. "One thing that is certain is that should it choose to go with sanctions and pressure, its dialogue process with North Korea that has been held through the diplomatic frame of six-party talks will face the risk of suspension."

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3. Japan on DPRK Missile Test

Mainichi Daily News ("GOV'T CONSIDERING TOTAL BAN ON EXPORTS TO NORTH KOREA", 2009/03/18) reported that the government on Thursday decided to step up economic sanctions

against the DPRK if the nation goes ahead with its proposed satellite launch. After extending the current sanctions against the DPRK, which expire on April 13, Japan will consider placing a total ban on exports to the DPRK. The current export ban is restricted to luxury items and items linked to weapons of mass destruction.

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4. UK on DPRK Missile Test

Yonhap News (Lee Chi-dong, "N. KOREA TO FACE STRONG DIPLOMATIC RESPONSE TO ROCKET LAUNCH: BRITISH MINISTER", Seoul, 2009/03/18) reported that a British minister urged the DPRK to drop its plan for a rocket launch due in early April, saying it would otherwise face a "strong diplomatic response." "North Korea is a concern to the whole international community," said Foreign Office Minister Bill Rammell, who began a two-day trip. Rammell stressed that the DPRK's launch of a missile, or a satellite as it claims, would violate a U.N. Security Council resolution.

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5. US Missile Defense Program

Agence French Presse ("IN TEST, US INTERCEPTS SHORT-RANGE MISSILE", Washington D.C., 2009/03/18) reported that the US military successfully shot down a short-range ballistic missile near Hawaii in a test of its ground-based missile defense system, the Pentagon said on Wednesday. The Pentagon's announcement came amid growing concern over the DPRK's scheduled April 4-8 rocket launch that the United States suspects is designed as a test of a long-range ballistic missile that could theoretically reach Alaska. It was the first time the US military fired two interceptors at a target missile in a test of defense weaponry designed to knock out missiles in their last stage of flight.

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6. US Journalists Detained in the DPRK

Agence France-Presse ("N.KOREA DETAINS TWO US JOURNALISTS", 2009/03/18) reported that the DPRK border guards have detained two US reporters who crossed a river into the reclusive state, a diplomatic source said, an incident that comes amid rising tensions on the peninsula. The journalists, both women, were detained Tuesday on the DPRK's border with the PRC along the Tumen River . "They apparently got too close to the North Korean side of the Tumen River" when they were seized, said Chun Kiwon, speaking by telephone from New York.

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7. Sino-DPRK Relations

Yonhap News ("N. KOREAN, CHINESE PREMIERS SEEK TO RESUME NUCLEAR TALKS", Beijing, 2009/03/18) reported that DPRK Premier Kim Yong-il and his PRC counterpart Wen Jiabao discussed

ways of resuming the six-party denuclearization talks and other regional issues Wednesday, amid tension surrounding Pyongyang's planned rocket launch. Kim started a five-day visit to China a day earlier, accompanied by an entourage of economy-related Cabinet ministers.

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8. US-ROK Joint Military Exercise

Xinhua News ("S KOREA, U.S. TERMINATE ANNUAL JOINT MILITARY DRILL ", Seoul, 2009/03/18) reported that the ROK and the US effectively completed their annual joint military drill on Thursday, South Korea's Ministry of National Defense said Thursday. Starting from last Monday, over 25,000 U.S. troops, a nuclear-powered U.S. aircraft carrier and tens of thousands of ROK troops were engaged in the two nation's Key Resolve and Foal Eagle exercise. The allies have successfully ended their scheduled training and will formally terminate their drill with an evaluation on Friday, the ministry said.

Korea Herald ("N. KOREAN SHIPS TO RESUME SAILING S. KOREAN STRAIT ", 2009/03/18) reported that DPRK commercial ships will resume sailing through a South Korean strait once a U.S.-ROK military exercise ends this week, a Seoul spokesman was quoted as saying. Under a 2005 inter-Korean shipping treaty, DPRK commercial boats can use the strait off the ROK's southern island of Jeju to cut short their routes. They are, however, asked to stay away for safety reasons while the annual joint military drill takes place in the Jeju region.

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9. DPRK Leadership

JoongAng Ilbo ("SEOUL CAREFULLY WATCHING MOVES OF NORTH'S GENERAL", 2009/03/18) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il once said his door is always open to veteran military man Kim Kyok-sik. The two, the leader said, are on "friendly terms." So it was with bewilderment that ROK intelligence watched Kim Kyok-sik, the former chief of the general staff of the Korean People's Army, leave Pyongyang in February and relocate to the strategically important city of Haeju, South Hwanghae, on the Yellow Sea. In essence, the 69-year-old Kim was demoted, from a four-star general in charge of the entire army to a three-star general heading an army corps. ROK intelligence has tried to keep close tabs on this curious shift.

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10. ROK Defense

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "BOEING ANNOUNCES BID FOR S. KOREA'S STEALTH JET DEAL", Seattle, 2009/03/18) reported that the U.S. Boeing Company unveiled a new F-15 Eagle fighter jet featuring tradar-evading stealth technology Wednesday, announcing its bid for ROK's third phase F-X fighter jet acquisition program, to begin by 2012. Earlier, Seoul officials said the third phase program would focus on obtaining the so-called fifth-generation stealth fighters. The F-X aims to procure 120 high-end warplanes by 2020, and Boeing already won the previous two deals with its F-15K fighters. Boeing officials said the forthcoming F-15 "Silent Eagle (SE)" could provide ROK's Air

Force with "cost-effective stealth" technologies as well as the F-15 Eagle's traditional long-range, large-payload capabilities. Besides the ROK, target customers for the F-15SE program include Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Japan and Israel.

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11. ROK Disaster Relief Operations

Korea Times ("SEOUL TO INCREASE INT'L ANTI-DISASTER EFFORTS", 2009/03/18) reported that President Lee Myung-bak pledged to increase the ROK's participation in international anti-disaster efforts, saying the country earned respect from the rest of the world for its recovery efforts in the PRC and Indonesia. The ROK sent firefighters and rescue workers to the countries as part of international humanitarian aid for victims of the earthquake in Sichuan Province in the PRC last year and the tsunami in Ache Province in Indonesia in 2004. Lee said the government would participate more actively in global anti-disaster programs in a bid to increase the ROK's status in the international community.

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12. US-ROK Security Alliance

Korea Herald ("ALLIES REACH DEAL ON MILITARY BASE POLLUTION CLEAN-UP", 2009/03/18) reported that the ROK and the US struck a deal on cleaning up U.S. military bases here that were returned to ROK authorities after several months of intensive negotiations, a diplomatic source was quoted as saying by Yonhap News Agency. "The two sides reached an agreement on improving ways to share the burden for cleaning up those bases," the source told Yonhap News Agency. "South Korea and the U.S. will soon announce the deal." The compromise calls for "more scientific ways" to split the cost, which are likely to run high, the source said without providing details before the announcement.

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13. ROK-Vietnam relations

JoongAn Ilbo ("SEOUL WILL AID VIETNAM ON ECONOMY", 2009/03/18) reported that Vietnam will be a test bed as the ROK attempts to share its financial know-how with developing countries in a more systemized manner. The Ministry of Strategy and Finance said it briefed President Lee Myung-bak yesterday on a plan to expand the Knowledge Sharing Program, through which the ROK has aided developing countries since 2004. The expanded program will aim to provide a systemized, comprehensive approach to achieving the rapid economic growth that the ROK, now the world's 13th-largest economy, recorded. Vietnam will host a pilot project, the ministry said.

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14. Japan SDF Anti-Piracy Operations

Kyodo News ("JAPAN'S ANTIPIRACY OPERATIONS OFF SOMALIA TO BEGIN AROUND MARCH

30", Tokyo, 2009/03/18) reported that Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force destroyers dispatched last week on an antipiracy mission off the coast of Somalia will begin escorting ships in the Gulf of Aden around March 30, the Defense Ministry said Thursday. The destroyers are now sailing in the South China Sea and can begin operations about that time if the voyage continues to go smoothly, Self-Defense Forces Chief of Staff Adm. Takashi Saito told a news conference.

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15. Japan Energy Supply

Bloomberg News ("JAPAN, VENEZUELA SIGN OIL COOPERATION DEAL; TAP ORINOCO DELTA", 2009/03/19) reported that Japan and Venezuela agreed to a comprehensive energy cooperation pact, paving the way for Japanese enterprises such as Inpex Corp. to tap oil reserves in the South American nation’s Orinoco Delta area. Toshihiro Nikai, Japan’s trade minister, and Venezuela’s Oil and Energy Minister Rafael Ramirez today signed an initial agreement in Tokyo under which the two nations will jointly develop a range of projects from oil exploration to refinery and petrochemical plant expansion, said Shin Hosaka, director of the oil and gas division at the ministry.

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16. Japan-ASEAN Relations

Channel NewsAsia ("JAPAN'S DEFENCE MINISTRY HOSTS FIRST-EVER SECURITY MEETING WITH ASEAN", 2009/03/17) reported that Japan's Defence Ministry has hosted its first-ever security meeting with senior counterparts from ASEAN. This is considered a breakthrough as security issues between Japan and some ASEAN countries have been regarded as highly sensitive because of its wartime past. Security cooperation was top of the agenda during the meeting. One such area is the fight against piracy in Somalia, where Malaysia and Japan have already deployed their military vessels. On peacekeeping operations, participants called for Japan to be involved in the region's capacity-building efforts.

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17. Cross-Straits Relations

Radio Taiwan ("PREMIER RAISES POSSIBILITY OF CHINA MILITARY EXCHANGES", 2009/03/17) reported that Taiwan Premier Liu Chao-shiuan has said Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense has been making preparations on the possibility of military exchanges with the PRC. Liu was speaking on Wednesday in the Legislature. Premier Liu said that the defense ministry should be and had been making preparations for this eventuality. A senior defense ministry official on Monday said that a more "mature environment" would be needed to create a military mutual trust mechanism. He said however that this would be one way to safeguard peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

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18. PRC-Philippines Territorial Dispute

Reuters ("CHINA TO SEND MORE SHIPS TO SOUTH CHINA SEA", Beijing, 2009/03/18) reported that the PRC may convert more navy ships into fishery vessels to patrol the South China Sea, the China Daily reported, as Beijing seeks to extend its reach over disputed islands that straddle key Asian shipping lanes. "China will make the best use of its (retired) naval ships and may also build more fishery patrol ships, depending on the need," Wu Zhuang, director of the Administration of Fishery and Fishing Harbor Supervision of the South China Sea, told the newspaper.

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19. Sino-Russian Trade Relations

Xinhua News ("CHINA-RUSSIA TRADE FACES CHALLENGES BUT BRIGHT PROSPECTS REMAIN", 2009/03/18) reported that in January, Russia's import from and export to the PRC plunged 51 percent and 27 percent, respectively, year- on- year, the first declines in 10 years, said Sergey Tsyplakov, Russian trade representative in the PRC. The monthly data contrasted starkly to the full-year 2008 figures. The two-way trade stood at 56.8 billion U.S. dollars last year, an increase of 18 percent over 2007, according to the PRC General Administration of Customs. Yang Chuang, a professor at the China Foreign Affairs University, said the global financial crisis weakened the Russian economy where income and demand were falling.

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II. PRC Report

20. PRC Environment

Xinhua Net ("2009 CHINA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED IN BEIJING", 2009/03/17) reported that the opening ceremony of 2009 China Environmental Protection Campaign was launched in Beijing March 17th. The theme of this year is “Let people breathe fresh air”. The Campaign was leaded by the Environment and Resource Protection Committee of the National People’s Congress, attended by Xinhua News Agency, People’s Daily, and many other media. The energy-saving and emission reduction targets of the nation’s 11th “Five-year Plan” and its practical experiences will be publicized during this campaign.

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21. PRC Civil Society and Poverty

Wenzhou Daily ("AOKANG GROUP PLANS TO PUT 3 MILLION RMB PER YEAR TO HELP STUDENTS AND ALLEVIATE POVERTY",) reported that Aokang Group, a shoemaking company, has been active in public welfare cause in recent years. In 2007, Chief Executive of the Group Wang Zhentao donated 20 million RMB to establish the first private charity foundation named after a private entrepreneur – Wan Zhentao Charity Foundation. According to incomplete statistics, Wang Zhentao and his Group have donated a total of over 1 billion RMB. Aokang Branch of Wenzhou Charity Society was established yesterday, and it also planned to put 3 million RMB per year to help

students and alleviate poverty.

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22. PRC Civil Society and the Environment

Beijing Morning News ("ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION NGO CALLS FOR GREEN PUBLISHING", 2009/03/18) reported that Green Peace, an international environmental protection NGO, with two publishing houses in Beijing jointly launched the “Green Publishing” campaign, calling for the public to use more recycled paper. The publishing houses promised to use recycled paper in all publications for the next three years.

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