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MARKTWO

I. Napsnet

1. DPRK Nuclear Program

Korea Herald (Jin Dae-woong, "U.S. ANTI-NUKE GROUP TO OPEN SEOUL OFFICE", Seoul, 2009/02/02) reported that Roy Kim, professor of Drexel University, said the Nuclear Threat Initiative will open a branch office in Seoul to help DPRK nuclear scientists find new jobs after the DPRK completely dismantles its main nuclear facilities at Yongbyon. The NTI is currently designing a program to train the DPRK's nuclear experts for peaceful jobs, Kim said. "The well-funded NTI is also considering ways to support not only nuclear scientists at Yongbyon, but also farmers near Yongbyon who provide them rice in case for North Korea's denuclearization," said Kim.

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2. US on DPRK Nuclear Program

Korea Times ("U.S. TO SEEK SIX-WAY TALKS DESPITE N. KOREA'S THREAT TO CUT TIES", 2009/01/31) reported that the United States Friday reiterated its pledge to denuclearize the DPRK through multilateral talks. "Let me just say this type of, you know, rhetoric is distinctly not helpful," State Department spokesman Robert Wood said in a daily news briefing. "But that's not going to deter us from continuing our efforts to achieve denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula through the six-party framework."

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3. DPRK on Nuclear Program

Yonhap (N. KOREA VOWS TO RETAIN NUCLEAR WEAPONS UNTIL U.S. REMOVES 'NUCLEAR THREAT', "", Seoul, 2009/02/02) reported that the DPRK vowed Monday to hold onto its nuclear

weapons until the United States removes "nuclear threats" against it. "As long as there is no nuclear dismantlement in the South to clear nuclear threats from the United States, dismantlement to remove our nuclear arms won't be materialized," a spokesman for the DPRK's General Chief of Staff said in an interview carried by the Korean Central News Agency.

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4. US-DPRK Relations

Korea Times ("US EXPERTS EN ROUTE TO PYONGYANG", Seoul, 2009/02/02) reported that a group of seven former U.S. government officials and experts were en route to the DPRK Monday, according to Yonhap News. The group includes Stephen Bosworth, a former U.S. ambassador to the ROK; Jonathan Pollack, professor of Asian and Pacific studies at the Naval War College; former Assistant Secretary of State Morton Abramowitz; and Leon Sigal, director of the Northeast Asia Cooperative Security Project at the Social Science Research Council. "We have information that the group will enter Pyongyang around Tuesday via Beijing," an ROK foreign ministry official said "We understand the media attention surrounding it, given the timing of the visit. It was scheduled a year ago and those experts make frequent visits to the North," he was quoted as saying.

Korea Herald ("OBAMA URGED TO SEND EMISSARY, HOLD SUMMIT WITH N. KOREAN LEADER", Seoul, 2009/02/02) reported that Leon V. Sigal, director of the Northeast Asia Cooperative Security Project at the Social Science Research Council, said Sunday, "After consulting with South Korea and Japan, the Obama administration should promptly send a high-level emissary, perhaps former President Bill Clinton or former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, to Pyongyang to offer a little more for a little more." Sigal also advised in an article posted on the Web site of The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists that US President Barack Obama "hold a summit meeting with Kim Jong-il in return for North Korea disposing some of its plutonium -- at a minimum the spent nuclear fuel removed during the disablement process."

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5. US Policy Toward DPRK

Korea Herald ("NOW IS NO TIME TO DOWNPLAY N. KOREA", 2009/02/02) reported that John Bolton, former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said in an article in the Wall Street Journal that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton seems to be falling prey to a logic that views recent DPRK provocations as "a desperate cry for help". "Although we know precious little about the North's progress, including how much weapons-grade uranium may have been produced, Mrs. Clinton cast doubt on whether uranium enrichment was a serious subject at all," Bolton said. Equally tempting - and equally dangerous - is the notion that the DPRK is not a truly pressing problem, he said.

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6. DPRK Human Rights

Reuters (Jon Herskovitz, "NORTH KOREAN CHILDREN EXPLOITED BY STATE: REPORT", Seoul, 2009/02/02) reported that the Seoul -based Citizen's Alliance for North Korean Human Rights and The Asia Center for Human Rights issued a report entitled "Situation Report on the Rights of the

Child in the DPRK . " " Child labor and economic exploitation have become widely spread and a customary practice accompanying the worsening economic hardship of the country," it stated. Children are often sent out to work at farms and factories or to scrounge for materials that can be used by the military or sold by local authorities, said the report, based on interviews with about 50 defectors. "Consequently, it seems illiteracy rates have increased and the overall level of academic achievement in North Korean youth has decreased in most areas except for Pyongyang and a handful of other areas," it said.

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7. US on DPRK Human Rights

Korea Times (Kim Sue-young, "NK DEFECTORS' GROUPS TO GET US GOV'T AID", Seoul, 2009/02/01) reported that the U.S. Department of State will directly provide groups organized by DPRK defectors with financial support for the first time, according to reports Sunday. Thus far, Washington has funded ROK groups working on DPRK human rights via the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). The State Department posted a notice on the Human Rights Democracy Fund (HRDF) last September and about 50 organizations reportedly applied for the program. An official of the department was quoted as saying by Radio Free Asia (RFA) that a total of \$3 million has been set aside for the program. But the official refused to elaborate on grantees, saying the issue was ``very sensitive."

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8. Inter-Korea Relations

Associated Press (Jae-soon Chang, "ACTIVISTS TO SEND NKOREAN MONEY FOR KIM'S BIRTHDAY", Seoul, 2009/02/02) reported that activists who send leaflets to the DPRK by balloon said Monday they plan to include local currency as an incentive to pick up new propaganda to mark the birthday of leader Kim Jong-il . Unification Ministry spokesman Kim Ho-nyeon renewed a warning Monday that the activists could face jail or fines if they send DPRK money without government permission. "We are sending money to our family members," said Choi Sung-yong, an activist whose father was abducted from his fishing boat in the 1960s. "We don't believe we're violating the law ... If the government tries to punish us, we will take the punishment."

Associated Press (Hyung-jin Kim, "NORTH KOREA WARNS OF POSSIBLE WAR WITH SOUTH KOREA", Seoul, 2009/02/01) reported that Rodong Sinmun said in a commentary carried Sunday by the Korean Central News Agency that the ROK's confrontational policies may lead to "an unavoidable military conflict and a war." "The policy of confrontation" by the ROK government is "the very source of military conflicts and war", it said.

Arirang News ("LEE CONFIDENT INTER-KOREAN RELATIONS WILL IMPROVE SOON", Seoul, 2009/02/02) reported that President Lee Myung-bak said inter-Korean dialogue will open up again soon. In a televised discussion Friday, Lee said when Pyongyang realizes it has to cooperate with Seoul for the help it needs, the two Koreas are likely to sit down again together.

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9. ROK Policy Toward DPRK

Korea Times ("KOREANS BACK AID-FOR-DENUCLEARIZATION POLICY FOR NK", Seoul, 2009/02/02) reported that a poll released by the Korea Economic Research Institute Monday found that 68.4 percent of ROK citizens support the aid-for-denuclearization policy by the government of President Lee Myung-bak, whereas 27.2 percent said they didn't support it. The poll, which has an error margin of plus or minus 3.46 percentage points, was based on telephone interviews with 800 adults in January.

Korea Herald (Song Sang-ho, "DP LEADER ASKS LEE TO SOFTEN N.K. POLICY", Seoul, 2009/02/02) reported that Chung Sye-kyun, leader of the main opposition Democratic Party, on Monday urged President Lee Myung-bak to soften his DPRK policy. "Should the armed clashes between the two Koreas flare up, South Korea will be driven into even direr straights with an economic and security crisis," said Chung. "Peace on the peninsula is linked to the economy. No matter what cost and sacrifice it takes, the policy to maintain peace here is necessary."

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10. US-ROK Alliance

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "USFK CHIEF PLEDGES NAVAL, AIR-CENTRIC REINFORCEMENT", Seoul, 2009/02/01) reported that Gen. Walter Sharp, commander of the U.S. Forces Korea, reaffirmed plans to provide stronger naval and air-centric support to ROK troops after 2012, when Seoul takes over wartime operational control of its forces from the United States, Stars and Stripes reported Saturday. "I think that is a possibility," Sharp was quoted as saying. "The Korean ground forces are capable." Sharp said a key element after the transition is to find the correct mix of assets to respond in the first few days of any attack.

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11. ROK-Syria Relations

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "S. KOREA SEEKS TIES WITH SYRIA", Seoul, 2009/02/02) reported that the ROK is pushing ahead with establishing diplomatic ties with Syria, diplomatic sources said Monday. The Seoul government proposed the formalization of diplomatic relations with the Middle Eastern nation in 2005, but Syria rejected the offer, citing its relationship with the DPRK. "The government proposed last September that the two countries establish diplomatic ties through the South Korean Embassy in Lebanon," an official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade said. "Syria has not responded to the offer, only saying it is reviewing the matter."

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12. US-Japan Relations

Kyodo ("CLINTON TO VISIT JAPAN AS EARLY AS IN MID-FEBRUARY", Washington, 2009/02/01) reported that U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will visit Japan as early as in mid-February on

her first overseas trip since assuming office, a senior U.S. government official said Sunday. Though details of her itinerary are yet to be set, the official said Clinton will also travel to the ROK and the PRC after stopping in Japan.

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13. Japanese Economic Aid

BBC ("JAPAN ANNOUNCES ASIA AID PACKAGE", Tokyo, 2009/01/31) reported that Japan's Prime Minister Taro Aso announced a 1.5 trillion yen (US\$17 billion) aid package to help Asian countries weather the economic downturn. The money will be spent over three years on infrastructure projects and promoting trade. Aso also said that Japan's development assistance would be on the precondition "that the flow of trade and investment not be prohibited".

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14. Japanese Whaling Issue

Associated Press (Kristen Gelineau, "ACTIVISTS: WHALERS LAUNCH ATTACK IN ANTARCTIC", Sydney, 2009/02/02) reported that Japanese whalers blasted members of the Sea Shepard Conservation Society with a water cannon and hurled hunks of metal and golf balls at them Monday, the group said. Two members were lightly injured in seas about 2,000 miles (3,200 kilometers) southeast of Tasmania, said Paul Watson, the group's leader. A spokesman for the whalers said he had no information on the claims.

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15. Japanese Politics

Yomiuri Shimbun ("DOES OZAWA WANT TO BE PM?", Tokyo, 2009/02/02) reported that some observers question whether Democratic Party of Japan President Ichiro Ozawa actually want to be prime minister if his party wins the next House of Representatives election. Speaking at a news conference after a meeting of the party's Iwate prefectural chapter on Saturday, Ozawa said, "If I stay on as DPJ president, and the DPJ or the DPJ-led opposition wins a majority of seats in the next general election, I must fulfill my responsibility." Asked why Ozawa had begun to express a willingness to become prime minister, a close aide said, "Because he felt there was a need to give the impression he has changed his political style in preparation for the next lower house election.

Bloomberg ("ASO RISK DEEP RECESSION BY DELAYING VOTE", 2009/02/02) reported that analysts said Prime Minister Taro Aso risks deepening Japan's recession in order to delay an election he's likely to lose. "A tsunami is coming and we need effective economic stimulus from the government," says Tsuneo Watanabe, a Tokyo-based adjunct fellow with the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "By clinging to power," Aso and his Liberal Democratic Party are "making it harder for ordinary people to cope with this severe downturn." "Japan's fiscal policy is not just going to lag everywhere else in Asia, it's going to lag behind everywhere in the world," says Glenn Maguire, chief Asia-Pacific economist at Societe Generale SA in Hong Kong. "In the absence of a general election, the ability of Japan to put in a timely, significant, effective policy response is clearly very low."

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16. Japanese Spy Satellites

Yomiuri Shimbun ("GOVERNMENT PLANS POWERFUL INFO-GATHERING SATELLITE", 2009/02/01) reported that the Japanese government will embark on a research and development program in fiscal 2009 to develop an optical information-gathering satellite that will be able to identify objects on the ground with far greater precision than the most advanced commercial satellites, officials said Saturday. A demonstration satellite is scheduled to be launched in fiscal 2012 to ascertain its performance in space, they said. A full-fledged optical information-collecting satellite with the envisaged cutting-edge optical capability will be put into orbit in fiscal 2014.

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17. Japanese Asylum Policy

Asahi Shimbun ("NEARLY 1,600 SEEK REFUGEE STATUS", Tokyo, 2009/01/31) reported that a record 1,599 people sought refugee status in Japan last year, Immigration Bureau officials said Friday. The figure was nearly double the 816 who applied in 2007, they said. Of the total applications processed, 57 people were granted refugee status last year, 54 of them from Myanmar (Burma).

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18. Sino-US Relations

Agence France-Presse (Pascale Trouillaud, "OBAMA TO TEST US-CHINA TIES", Beijing , 2009/02/02) reported that analysts said that US President Barack Obama's administration could take a harder line on trade disputes and human rights with the PRC than George W. Bush's team. Jean-Pierre Cabestan, a China expert at Hong Kong's Baptist University, stated, "As always during a period of crisis, protectionist tendencies will emerge... (The Democrats) will be even more concerned than their predecessors about protecting American jobs. Frictions are to be expected." Jean-Francois Di Meglio, the vice president of Asia Centre, a Paris-based think tank, stated, "We're in a classic situation at the start of a Democratic administration. Those are never the best of times in Sino-American ties, but later they improve." He said that while the Democrats are likely to be less accommodating than the Bush administration on human rights, "it won't derail the relationship."

BBC ("OBAMA AND HU 'URGE CLOSER TIES'", 2009/01/30) reported that US President Barack Obama telephoned his PRC counterpart Hu Jintao, the White House spokesman Robert Gibbs said. Gibbs gave no further details, but Xinhua news agency said both had "expressed willingness to further ties". Hu said the PRC was ready to "expand cooperation... to confront various global challenges together", it said.

Yomiuri Shimbun (Satoshi Ogawa , "OBAMA TO LIFT CHINA TALKS TO NEW LEVEL", Washington , 2009/02/02) reported that a ranking State Department official told The Yomiuri Shimbun on Sunday that the administration of U.S. President Barack Obama has decided to launch a new comprehensive strategic dialogue with the PRC. Several sources said previous lower-level discussions had been

unable to bring about political decisions on the PRC side. The Obama administration would like to upgrade the bilateral discussions to periodic dialogues through mutual visits by Vice President Joe Biden and PRC Premier Wen Jiabao, the sources said. The new dialogue is aimed at qualitatively changing the focus of U.S.-PRC relations from economic matters to a more diverse range of issues, a U.S. diplomatic source said. As such, the new dialogue is expected to include military matters.

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19. PRC-UK Relations

BBC ("BROWN AND CHINESE PM HOLD TALKS", 2009/02/02) reported that UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown held talks with his PRC counterpart Wen Jiabao as the leader's visit to the UK draws to a close. The two discussed ways of handling the global economic downturn and how to boost international trade. The first two days of Wen's three-day visit were met by protests over human-rights abuses in the PRC and Tibet. Five people were arrested on Sunday and more protests are expected.

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20. PRC Civic Unrest

Reuters ("CHINA CALLS FOR ABSOLUTE OBEDIENCE FROM MILITARY", Beijing, 2009/02/02) reported that the PRC at a Central Military Commission meeting Sunday presided over by President and commission chairman Hu Jintao called for unity in its armed forces and absolute obedience to the Communist Party. All military forces should ensure that they "uncompromisingly obey the Party and Central Military Commission's command at any time and under any circumstances", the commission said in a statement issued on Sunday and reported by Xinhua news agency.

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21. PRC Bird Flu

Associated Press ("FARMER IN CENTRAL CHINA SICK WITH BIRD FLU", Beijing , 2009/02/01) reported that a 21-year-old woman in central PRC has been infected by the H5N1 strain of bird flu in the country's eighth reported case of the disease this year, the Health Ministry said. The woman, a farmer surnamed Shu in the central province of Hunan, fell ill Jan. 23 after handling poultry that died from virus, the ministry said on its Web site late Saturday without giving more details. She was in stable condition and recovering, it said.

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22. PRC Public Health

BBC ("CHINA BIRTH DEFECTS 'UP SHARPLY'", 2009/02/01) reported that Jiang Fan, from the PRC's National Population and Family Planning Commission, noted an alarming rise in the number of babies with birth defects, a media report says. Jiang said environmental pollution was a cause of the increase. The coal-mining heartland of Shanxi province had the biggest problem. "The problem

of birth defects is related to environmental pollution, especially in eight main coal zones," said An Huanxiao, the director of Shanxi provincial family planning agency.

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II. ROK Report

23. Inter-Korea Relations

Ohmynews ("SUNGMIN CHANG CLAIMS POSSIBILITIES OF WAR IN KOREAN PENINSULA", 2009/01/31) reported that Sungmin Chang, representative of the World and North-South Asia Peace Forum, said on Saturday, "if President Lee continues the current situation with DPRK, a second Korean War could possibly occur." He explained that "Right now, DPRK is on the verge of collapse and is trying to carry on the regime in their own manner; in other words, DPRK is going through its war scenario in phases."

People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy ("IS DPRK TRYING TO LEAD NORTH-SOUTH RELATION TO EXTREME CONFRONTATION?", 2009/01/30) wrote that the DPRK currently blames the Lee Myung-bak administration for confrontation between the two Koreas, but its attitude, invalidating agreements and threatening with a possible war, is also responsible for the rupture. What makes the situation even more hopeless is that the government is still neglecting such condition and waiting only for the DPRK to change its attitude.

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24. DPRK Nuclear Program

Hankyoreh ("TAEHO KANG SAYS HANDSHAKE WILL UNCLENCH THE FIST", 2009/01/29) wrote that the ROK, U.S., and Japan currently want second stage denuclearization as agreement of verification protocol and third stage dismantlement as fulfillment. However, the DPRK sees obligations of fulfillment in the agreement and demands the U.S. to promise suitable measures for the third stage. In this way, verification makes negotiation more complicated, leading to a deadlock. Chosun Shinbo claims that the normalization of relations is the shortcut to denuclearization.

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