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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. Napsnet

1. US on DPRK Missile Program

Korea Herald ("'US READY TO SHOOT DOWN N.K. MISSILE'", 2009/02/28) reported that Admiral Timothy Keating, commander of U.S. forces in Asia and the Pacific, said that the U.S. military is prepared to shoot down any DPRK ballistic missile if President Barack Obama should give the order. "If a missile leaves the launch pad we'll be prepared to respond upon direction of the president," he said in an interview with ABC News. "I'm not a betting man but I'd go like 60/40, 70/30 that it will, they will attempt to launch a satellite. There's equipment moving up there that would indicate the preliminary stages of preparation for a launch. So I'd say it's more than less likely." "Should it look like it's not a satellite launch - that it's something other than a satellite launch - we'll be ready to respond," he said.

Associated Press ("'US WATCHING NK MISSILE MOVE CLOSELY'", 2009/03/02) reported that Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Sunday the United States is watching the DPRK even more closely these days because of reports the DPRK plans to test-fire a long-range missile. Mullen expressed hope on CNN's "State of the Union" that the DPRK would not be ``provocative." Noting that the North has launched missiles before, he said neither he nor Defense Secretary Robert Gates has made a recommendation about what to do if there is a launch. He said any recommendations and policy decisions will come based on the timing and what the DPRK does.

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2. Japan on DPRK Missile Program

Asahi Shimbun (Toru Higashioka, "JAPAN WARNS NORTH KOREA ON SATELLITE LAUNCH", Tokyo, 2009/03/02) reported that Japanese Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone said Sunday that even a satellite launch by the DPRK would constitute a violation of a U.N. Security Council resolution. "Even if a satellite was launched or even if North Korea explains that (the missile) was a satellite, it would be a clear violation of the Security Council resolution and we strongly ask North Korea to exercise restraint," Nakasone said.

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3. US-DPRK Relations

Agence France-Presse (Jun Kwanwoo, "NKOREA, UN COMMAND HOLD MILITARY TALKS ON EASING TENSIONS", Seoul, 2009/03/02) reported that the DPRK and the US-led United Nations Command on Monday began military talks aimed at easing border tensions, their first such meeting

in more than six years, the UN Command said. The UN Command, in what it described as a "positive" move, said the DPRK had requested the meeting "to discuss tension reduction." "These talks can be useful in building trust and preventing misunderstanding as well as introducing transparency regarding the intentions of both sides," it said in a statement.

Associated Press ("NKOREA WARNS AGAIN OF CONFLICT ON KOREAN PENINSULA", Seoul, 2009/02/28) reported that the DPRK on Saturday accused the U.S. military of making provocative moves along the DMZ. The U.S. provocations "at a time when the North-South relations are inching close to the brink of a war may touch off unpredictable military conflicts," the DPRK military said in a message sent to the ROK, according to the Korean Central News Agency . "If the U.S. forces keep behaving arrogantly ... the Korean People's Army will take a resolute counteraction." The ROK Defense Ministry dismissed the accusation as groundless, calling the U.S. military moves "legitimate activities".

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4. DPRK Leadership

Dong-A Ilbo ("RUMORS SPREAD OF KIM JONG UN AS HEIR APPARENT", Seoul, 2009/03/02) reported that conservative newsletters in the ROK specializing in DPRK affairs Sunday said Kim Jong-un, the youngest son of DPRK leader Kim Jong-il, is the heir apparent. Rumors are also swirling that the son threw a party Feb. 16 for high-ranking military officials to mark his father’s 67th birthday.

Yonhap ("FLURRY OF ACTIVITY BY N. KOREAN LEADER KIM IN NORTHERN CITY OF MANPHO", Seoul, 2009/03/01) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il visited the country's northern city of Manpo where he provided field guidance at various places. The trip began with a visit to a smeltery in the city just south of the DPRK-PRC border, according to a report by the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA). The report did not provide any specific details of the trip, including when it was taken or how long it lasted. Unlike his other trips where he usually inspects only one or two places, the visit included stops in at least three other places.

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5. Inter-Korean Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("LEE STRESSES COMMITMENT TO PACTS WITH N.KOREA", Seoul, 2009/03/02) reported that ROK President Lee Myung-bak at a ceremony marking the 90th anniversary of the March 1 Independence Movement on Sunday said, "South and North Korea have agreed to seek peaceful coexistence and co-prosperity, while recognizing and respecting each other. I am going to respect these inter-Korean agreements." Lee said he is "not negative" toward two inter-Korean agreements negotiated by the previous administrations.

Joongang Ilbo ("PRESIDENT CALLS ON NORTH TO RETURN TO NEGOTIATIONS", Seoul, 2009/03/02) reported that ROK President Lee Myung-bak urged the DPRK Sunday to come to the negotiating table instead of threatening the peace. In a speech to mark the 90th anniversary of the Korean independence movement, Lee said, “South and North Korea need to start discussions soon.

The door to unconditional dialogue remains open." "South Korea is one that is most concerned with North Koreans' lives and happiness," Lee said. "What really protects the North is not a nuclear weapon or a missile but cooperation with South Korea and the international community," Lee said.

Yonhap ("SEOUL DENIES STUDENT TRIP TO NORTH", Seoul, 2009/02/28) reported that the ROK Unification Ministry rejected a request by the three student activists seeking to visit the DPRK. The students are members of an ROK civic committee aimed at implementing inter-Korean summit accords. They were scheduled to meet their DPRK counterparts in Pyongyang to discuss annual celebrations for the June 15 summit agreement reached in 2000. "The government decided to withhold approval, considering the students' previous activities and the current state of inter-Korean relations," ministry spokesman Kim Ho-nyoun told reporters.

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6. ROK Government

Arirang News ("CHIEF NUCLEAR NEGOTIATOR TO BECOME DEPUTY NIS DIRECTOR", Seoul, 2009/03/02) reported that Kim Sook, the ROK's chief envoy to the six-party nuclear talks, has been tapped as first deputy director of the National Intelligence Service in charge of international affairs. Kim is a career diplomat and has served as the ROK's top nuclear negotiator for the past 10 months.

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7. Japan Bird Flu

Asahi Shimbun ("AICHI BIRD FLU WAS WEAK VIRULENT TYPE", Tokyo, 2009/03/02) reported that the highly pathogenic bird flu virus detected last week at a quail farm in Toyohashi, Aichi Prefecture, was identified as the attenuated H7N6 type, the farm ministry said Sunday. The ministry and the Aichi prefectural government plan to let poultry farms in the area start shipping products again as early as today if their birds are confirmed to be free of the virus.

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8. Japanese Military Deployments

Yomiuri Shimbun ("COLLECTIVE SELF-DEFENSE CONCEPT 'MUST BE REDEFINED'", Osaka, 2009/02/28) reported that Japan's right to collective self-defense should be reinterpreted in the context of strengthening Japan-U.S. relations, Shotaro Yachi, former administrative vice foreign minister, said Friday. Prime Minister Taro Aso's administration should pursue flexible realism in diplomacy, according to Yachi, who cited the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean as an example of how such an approach can succeed.

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9. US-Japanese Alliance

Asahi Shimbun ("OZAWA'S NATIONAL SECURITY COMMENT CAUSES A STIR", Tokyo, 2009/03/02)

reported that Ichiro Ozawa, president of Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan), on Friday defended his remarks that U.S. troops were not needed in Japan. Ozawa said, "If Japan fulfilled its role for the defense of Japan as much as possible, the burden placed on the U.S. military would decline, wouldn't it? I only said what I think is a very natural thing." "Since I am not yet in control of the government, I will have to discuss such specific matters with the United States after we gain control of the government," he said.

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10. Sino-Japanese Relations

Asahi Shimbun (Toru Higashioka, "JAPAN, CHINA TO DISCUSS EXTRADITION", Tokyo, 2009/02/28) reported that Japan and the PRC will likely agree to start negotiations on extraditing suspects and transferring convicts, as well as on cooperation in search and rescue operations in the East China Sea, government sources said. The treaty would reduce the burden on Japanese prisons and help Chinese convicts rehabilitate themselves through prison terms in their own country, Japanese officials said. The planned accord on search and rescue operations would help realize a previous agreement to turn the East China Sea into a "sea of peace, cooperation and friendship" for the two countries, Japanese officials said.

Associated Press ("JAPAN, CHINA DISCUSS GAS RESERVE DEVELOPMENT", Beijing, 2009/02/28) reported that Japan's Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone met with his PRC counterpart Yang Jiechi Saturday. Nakasone said the two countries should lead regional initiatives to battle the financial crisis and stimulate trade, Japanese Foreign Ministry spokesman Kazuo Kodama said. "As Japan-China relations are now confronted with some difficulties, I would like to communicate with China on how to advance the ties," Nakasone said, according to Xinhua News Agency. The two sides avoided inflaming tensions over a disputed East China Sea island chain, but they agreed their conflicting claims should not undermine their overall relationship, Kodama said. They also agreed that Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso will visit the PRC this year, he said.

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11. Sino-US Military Relations

Washington Post (Maureen Fan, "U.S., CHINA TALKS END WITH PLANS FOR MORE", Beijing, 2009/03/01) reported that the PRC and the Obama administration concluded their first military consultations Saturday without setting a timetable for high-level exchanges while agreeing to begin working-level talks Monday. "These were the best set of talks that I have ever been part of," said David Sedney, deputy assistant secretary of defense for East Asia, who co-chaired the annual Defense Policy Coordination Talks. "Not because we pretended that everything was fine and everything was resolved, but because we worked very seriously to address the obstacles while at the same time engaging in some discussions in some of the new areas like counterpiracy."

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12. US on PRC Anti-Piracy Mission

Associated Press (Christopher Bodeen, "US PRAISES CHINA ANTI-PIRACY ROLE OFF SOMALIA",

Beijing, 2009/02/28) reported that U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense David Sedney praised the PRC's contribution to anti-piracy efforts off the coast of Somalia on Saturday. "The work they've done has been highly professional, it's been highly effective, and it's been very well coordinated with the United States and the other navies that are working there," Sedney said.

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13. PRC Food Safety

Associated Press ("CHINA SAYS FOOD SAFETY SITUATION STILL GRIM", Beijing, 2009/03/02) reported that the PRC enacted a new food safety law Saturday, promising tougher penalties for makers of tainted products. The PRC Health Ministry said Monday, "At present, China's food security situation remains grim, with high risks and contradictions popping out," adding that it cannot afford "even the slightest relaxation over supervision."

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14. PRC Tibet Issue

Reuters (Emma Graham-Harrison, "CHINA'S GRIP ON TIBET TIGHT, BUT OPTIONS LIMITED", Beijin, 2009/03/02) reported that the PRC's campaign to cauterize short-term dissent is fuelling a new level of Tibetan resentment and distrust. "The Communists know they are faced with major problems in Tibet, but unfortunately they are not looking at the root cause of the problem," said Tsering Shakya, a Tibet expert and research chair at the University of British Columbia . "People are really very much galvanized by the idea that the Chinese government will not listen to them. There is clearly a consensus in the (Tibetan) community that they have to take matters into their own hands."

Associated Press (Henry Sanderson, "TIBETAN MONK REPORTEDLY SET HIMSELF ON FIRE", Beijing, 2009/02/28) reported that a Tibetan Buddhist monk doused himself with gasoline and set himself ablaze in western China in an apparent protest against government restrictions on religion, and security forces shot him, international Tibetan advocacy groups reported Saturday. The monk, identified as Tapey, was shot Friday afternoon in the Tibetan county of Aba in Sichuan province.

Reuters ("TIBETAN MONKS PROTEST IN RESTIVE WESTERN CHINA - REPORT", Beijing, 2009/03/01) reported that about 50 Tibetan monks demonstrated outside the Sey Monastery in an ethnic Tibetan part of Sichuan province after they were banned from holding a traditional New Year's prayer ceremony on Sunday, the Students for a Free Tibet group said. Earlier, a large group of monks had streamed into their main temple hall to hold banned Monlam Chenmo prayers, a key part of ceremonies to mark the Tibetan New Year, but those were broken up, said the group's executive director Lhadon Tethong. As they left the hall some went onto the street where they shouted slogans calling for religious freedom. Police stopped the protests, the monastery is now sealed and there is a heavy police presence, Tethong said, citing witnesses.

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