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MARKTWO

I. NAPSNet

1. US on DPRK Nuclear Program

Yonhap News ("U.S. SKEPTICAL OF REPORTS ON N. KOREA'S PREPARATIONS FOR 3RD NUCLEAR TEST: STATE DEPT.", 2010/04/20) reported that the US dismissed reports that the DPRK is preparing for another nuclear test. "We're skeptical of that report," State Department spokesman Philip Crowley said. "But obviously it's an area that we watch intensively. And we will keep watching for evidence of any provocative activity. But I would be skeptical of that report."

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2. US on DPRK Missile Program

Yonhap News (Hwang Doo-hyong, "N. KOREA POSES MAJOR MISSILE THREAT TO U.S.: PENTAGON", Washington, 2010/04/20) reports that the DPRK and Iran pose a major missile threat to the United States with their push to develop long-range missiles that can reach the continental U.S., a senior U.S. official said Tuesday. "The threat to the U.S. homeland from states like the DPRK and Iran continues to develop," James Miller, principal deputy undersecretary of defense for policy, told a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing. "Neither has yet acquired ICBMs that could reach the United States, but both are working to acquire and/or develop long-range ballistic missile capabilities, including space-launched vehicles, which include many of the necessary technologies." ICBM stands for intercontinental ballistic missile.

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3. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Yonhap News (Byun Duk-kun, "NUCLEAR TALKS NOT POSSIBLE IF PYONGYANG LINKED TO SINKING OF S. KOREAN SHIP", Seoul, 2010/04/20) reports that the resumption of multilateral denuclearization talks on the DPRK will face a setback if the nation is found to have been involved in the recent sinking of a the ROK warship, the ROK's Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan said Tuesday. "I believe the resumption of the six-party talks will not be possible for some time if we find evidence that clearly shows the DPRK's involvement," the minister told a press briefing.

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4. Japan on Aid to the DPRK

Kyodo News ("OKADA REJECTS BAN'S REQUEST TO PROVIDE HUMANITARIAN AID TO N. KOREA", 2010/04/20) reported that Japanese Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada has rejected UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon's request that Japan provide humanitarian assistance to the DPRK, on the ground that there is no guarantee the aid would reach the people in need of it, UN sources said. Ban made the request during talks with Okada in New York on March 31, saying the DPRK may see its food situation reach a critical stage in June and July, the sources said. But Okada was quoted as telling Ban, "The issue of North Korea 's abduction (of Japanese nationals) is yet to be resolved. The North Korean nuclear problem is also unresolved."

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5. Inter-Korea Economic Cooperation

Yonhap News (Sam Kim, "N. KOREA ENDS INSPECTION OF KAESONG INDUSTRIAL PARK", Seoul, 2010/04/20) reports that the DPRK wrapped up a sudden inspection of the Kaesong inter-Korean factory park on Tuesday without elaborating on what steps they will take in the future, an official here said. "The North Korean delegation left the Kaesong industrial base in the afternoon, and the inspection seems to be over," said the Unification Ministry official, who asked for customary anonymity.

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6. ROK on Sunken Naval Ship

Yonhap News (Lee Chi-dong, "LEE CALLS FOR PATIENCE UNTIL SUNKEN SHIP PROBE IS COMPLETED", Seoul, 2010/04/20) reports that President Lee Myung-bak said Tuesday that his government is prepared for "various scenarios" depending on the results of the ongoing investigation into a naval ship sinking, but stressed it is too early to blame the DPRK for the incident. "We are prepared for various scenarios, but we are not at a stage where we can talk about conclusions," he said in a meeting with ruling and opposition party leaders. It was the first meeting of its kind since the DPRK fired a long-range rocket a year ago.

Chosun Ilbo ("U.S. GETS MORE ACTIVE IN CHEONAN INVESTIGATION", 2010/04/20) reports that

the ROK military has asked the U.S. for intelligence about the DPRK submarines and espionage operations against the South to establish whether the DPRK was involved in the sinking of the Navy corvette Cheonan on March 26, according to a source on Monday. The source said, "The South Korean and U.S. intelligence agencies are trying to check what the North Korean Army was doing, including what communications they exchanged and what their submarines or submersibles were doing around the time of the disaster." The ROK military reportedly asked the U.S. military for intelligence about the DPRK's submarine bases on the west coast like Cape Bipagot in South Hwanghae Province and the activities of the DPRK subs in the West Sea.

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7. Inter-Korean Relations

Yonhap News ("2 N. KOREAN SPIES ARRESTED IN SEOUL", Seoul, 2010/04/20) reports that two DPRK spies have been arrested while plotting to murder a high-ranking DPRK defector, the prosecution here said Tuesday. The DPRK citizens -- only identified by their family names Kim and Tong -- are accused of attempting to assassinate Hwang Jang-yop, a former secretary of the DPRK's ruling Workers' Party and chairman of the Supreme People's Assembly, under the order of the spy agency belonging to the DPRK's Ministry of People's Armed Forces, the Seoul Central District Prosecution said.

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8. Sino-DPRK Relations

Yonhap News ("N. KOREA NAMES CONSUL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR AS AMBASSADOR TO CHINA", 2010/04/20) reported that the DPRK 's new ambassador to the PRC arrived in Beijing, a diplomatic source said, amid Pyongyang's increasing efforts to strengthen ties with its foremost benefactor. "Choe Pyong-gwan headed into the city on a North Korean embassy vehicle" after arriving at an airport in the Chinese capital by airplane, the source in Beijing told Yonhap News Agency. "Choe Pyong-gwan was appointed as DPRK ambassador to China, according to a decree," the Korean Central News Agency said in a single-paragraph dispatch seen in Seoul.

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9. DPRK-Iran Relations

Agence France-Presse ("NORTH KOREA'S YONG-NAM TO VISIT IRAN: REPORT", Tehran, 2010/04/21) reported that Kim Yong-nam, president of the DPRK's Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA), will visit Iran in the summer, the official IRNA news agency reported on Tuesday. "This high-ranking official is expected to visit in two or three months ," Iranian foreign ministry's Asia affairs head Mohammad Ali Fathollahi told IRNA.

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10. US-ROK Security Alliance

Stars and Stripes ("WILL SOUTH KOREA BE READY TO ASSUME WARTIME COMMAND?", 2010/04/20) reported that but a growing number of critics question whether the ROK will have the advanced military capabilities — from command-and-control systems to missile defenses — needed to lead a war against an attacking DPRK. They contend that fundamental changes in command structure will complicate a military relationship between the US and the ROK that could already be strained under battle conditions. One of the most vocal supporters of the change is U.S. Forces Korea commander Gen. Walter Sharp, the current head of the Combined Forces Command, who would lead allied forces in a war today. He said that the ROK's military, while not capable of fighting a war against the DPRK on its own, is capable of leading the two countries during wartime.

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11. DPRK Leadership

Mainichi Shimbun ("N. KOREAN MEDIA HINTS KIM JONG IL TO TRANSFER POWER TO THIRD SON", 2010/04/20) reported that the DPRK's state-owned news organizations released photos in early March of Kim Jong Un, believed to be the leading candidate to succeed dictator Kim Jong Il, the Mainichi Shimbun has learned. The photos were released by the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on March 4. The Rodong Sinmum ran an article in its March 5 issue with many of the photos, reporting that Kim Jong Il inspected an iron works in Hamgyongbuk-do. Most of the photos show Kim Jong Un wearing what appears to be a navy-blue suit and red tie, and standing by his father. They appear to be listening to an explanation provided by a guide. One of the photos shows Kim Jong Un taking notes.

Korea Herald ("PHOTO SEEMS UNLIKELY TO BE N.K. HEIR", Seoul, 2010/04/20) reported that the ROK government on Tuesday expressed skepticism over recent Japanese media reports displaying photos of a man they claim is Kim Jong-eun. "It seems unlikely that the man in the pictures is Kim Jong-eun, mostly because of his physical features," said one Unification Ministry official, declining to be identified. Officials pointed out that the man in the photos appeared to be at least 30 years of age. The younger Kim is said to be in his late 20s. The man also appeared to bear little resemblance to previously released photos of Kim Jong-eun that are widely assumed to be authentic. "Our basic policy regarding Kim Jong-eun is that we cannot confirm whether there is such a man, and whether he is the heir apparent," said Lee Jong-ju, the Unification Ministry spokeswoman.

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12. DPRK Defectors

Yonhap News ("ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL FOR N. KOREAN STUDENTS OPENS IN SEOUL", Seoul, 2010/04/20) reports that the first accredited high school opened Tuesday for the DPRK students who have settled in the ROK. Yeomyung, established in central Seoul in 2004, used to provide schooling for older aged students whose families had defected from the DPRK. Graduates had to pass state qualification exams in order to receive high school diplomas since it was not a formally accredited institution.

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13. ROK on US Nuclear Weapons

Agence France-Presse ("SEOUL REJECTS REDEPLOYMENT OF US NUCLEAR WEAPONS", Seoul, 2010/04/21) reported that on Wednesday ruled out redeploying US atomic weapons on its territory in response to the DPRK's nuclear arsenal. "It can never be our option," Foreign Minister Yu Myung-Hwan said at a lecture. "Redeployment of nuclear deterrence must be dealt with within the framework of a global security and in that regard, a policy coordination with the United States as part of its global nuclear strategy is crucial," he said. The ROK will host the next major nuclear summit in 2012, and Yu said he hoped the occasion would be used to pressure Pyongyang. "The summit will serve as the last message or warning to North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons. This will be the last chance for the North to do so," he said.

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14. ROK Military Capability

Donga Ilbo ("MILITARY TO FOCUS ON `EXISTING N. KOREAN THREAT`", 2010/04/21) reports that the military will focus on "the existing threat of the DPRK as priority criteria in decision making to boost its combat capability in the wake of the sinking of the naval patrol ship Cheonan. Previously, the military had placed more importance on potential threats including the PRC and Japan rather than the DPRK when setting a "plan on demand for military capability and the reinforcement of combat ability." The plan for military capability demand is designed to determine overall needs based on demand for combat capability requested by the armed forces. That of combat capability adjustment intends to single out priorities for strengthening capacity based on demand.

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15. ROK Nuclear Research

Yonhap News ("S. KOREA'S RESEARCH UNIT PICKED FOR INT'L FUSION REACTOR TESTS", Seoul, 2010/04/20) reports that the ROK's superconducting Tokamak research unit has been tapped to test the international fusion reactor being built in France, a government laboratory said Tuesday. The National Fusion Research Institute (NFRI) said it signed a memorandum of understanding with officials from the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) aimed at using the locally designed Korea Superconducting Tokamak Advanced Research (KSTAR) to conduct vital tests.

Yonhap News ("IAEA WILL SHARE TECHNOLOGY TO CONTROL NUCLEAR WASTE: AMANO", Seoul, 2010/04/20) reports that the international atomic energy regulator is dedicated to sharing latest technologies and good practices to help cope with nuclear waste, the head of the Vienna-based agency said Tuesday. In a meeting with reporters in Seoul, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) head Yukiya Amano did not elaborate on the feasibility of the ROK developing an advanced reprocessing system to recycle spent fuel rods, but stressed the need to help countries make right decisions on this issue.

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16. Japan Arms Exports

The Financial Times ("CALL FOR JAPAN TO EASE CURBS ON ARMS EXPORTS", 2010/04/20) reported that Japan 's defence ministry is seeking to ease the nation's ban on arms exports to allow contractors to join the global development of new weapons systems including advanced fighter jets. Akihisa Nagashima, parliamentary vice-minister of defence, told the Financial Times that the move reflects concern about the competitiveness of the country's defence industry and the high prices its military must pay for arms that are often less than cutting edge. He also said exports would be limited to "friendly states".

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17. Japan on US Military Base

Kyodo News ("ISLAND MAYORS REJECT MEETING WITH TOKYO ON BASE RELOCATION IDEA", Tokyo, 2010/04/20) reports that Tokunoshima Island in Kagoshima Prefecture rejected on Tuesday an overture by the government of Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama for a meeting on the relocation of a U.S. Marine base, further clouding the chances of the government settling the months-long dispute by its self-imposed deadline of the end of May. Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Kinya Takino called mayors of the three towns on the island Tuesday and requested that they hold a meeting with Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirofumi Hirano, in an apparent bid to have Hirano explain an idea of transferring the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Okinawa Prefecture to the island, according to the mayors.

Kyodo ("GOV'T STILL EYES RELOCATING FUTEMNA TO TOKUNOSHIMA", Tokyo, 2010/04/21) reported that the Japanese government will continue to pursue relocating a U.S. Marine base in Okinawa to Tokunoshima Island in Kagoshima Prefecture, Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirofumi Hirano suggested Wednesday. "If we work hard now, there's a good possibility (of meeting with the mayors of the three towns on the island)," Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirofumi Hirano said at a morning news conference, adding that he will consider contacting the mayors in person to seek a meeting with them. Hirano asked for "a little more time" before officially announcing the government's plan and seeking acceptance from any potential base host, saying, "We are looking (at the situation) from various, comprehensive angles." "There is no additional plan in mind (on the part of the government)," a government source said the same day.

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18. Japan Politics

Asahi Shimbun ("OSAKA GOVERNOR SETS UP LOCAL PARTY", 2010/04/20) reports that Osaka Governor Toru Hashimoto caused a stir Monday with his launch of a local party to push through his vision of a radical re-structuring of local governments in Osaka Prefecture. The new party, Osaka Ishin no Kai (Osaka restoration group), proposes the creation of "special wards" in the prefecture with greater authority and financial clout than Tokyo's 23 wards. Thirty local politicians--24 Osaka prefectural assembly members, one Osaka city assembly member and five Sakai city assembly members--joined the party as founding members. Hashimoto will be its leader.

Asahi Shimbun ("CABINET SUPPORT RATE NOSE-DIVES TO 25%", 2010/04/20) reports that the Cabinet's support rate tumbled to 25 percent from 32 percent in March, as voters have become increasingly convinced Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama cannot deliver on his promises, an Asahi Shimbun survey showed. The continuing free fall pushed the support rate below 30 percent for the first time since Hatoyama took office in September 2009, when his Cabinet received a 71-percent support rate. Sixty-one percent of the respondents in the telephone survey conducted over the weekend said they did not support the Hatoyama administration, up 14 points from the March survey. Voters have become so disillusioned with Hatoyama's failure to deliver that they are turning away from his ruling Democratic Party of Japan.

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19. Japan Environment

Japan for Sustainability ("MINISTRY SUBMITS JAPAN'S PROPOSAL ON POST-2010 BIODIVERSITY TARGETS", 2010/04/20) reported that on January 6, 2010, the Ministry of the Environment submitted Japan's proposal on the "Post 2010 Biodiversity Targets" to the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. As the medium- to long-term objectives for 2050, the proposal aims to realize the harmony between human beings and nature all around the world, to improve the state of biodiversity from the current level as well as to sustainably increase the benefits of ecosystem services. The short-term target for 2020 has three points; to make biodiversity the mainstream, to expand biodiversity conservation activities, and to practice new methods to protect biodiversity.

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20. Sino-Japanese Relations

The Associated Press ("CHINESE FLEET PASSED NEAR JAPAN'S SOUTHERNMOST ISLAND", Tokyo, 2010/04/20) reported that two PRC submarines and eight destroyers that had been spotted by the Japanese authorities earlier this month on the high seas near Okinawa later passed near the nation's southernmost island of Okinotori, several government sources said. Okinotori, a tiny atoll about 1,700 kilometers south of Tokyo, lies midway between Taiwan and Guam in the Pacific in a strategically important spot. Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa declined to comment on the incident, telling reporters that the government has not yet confirmed the passage of the 10 PRC vessels.

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21. Cross-Strait Relations

Xinhua News ("SENIOR LEADER MEETS TAIWAN DELEGATION HONORING EMPEROR HUANGDI", 2010/04/20) reported that Senior Communist Party of PRC leader Jia Qinglin Monday met a visiting Taiwan delegation, who had attended a ceremony last week in honor of Huangdi, the Yellow Emperor, on the PRC mainland. Huangdi, a legendary hero who lived 4,000 years ago, is considered to be the common ancestor of all Chinese people. Jia, a Standing Committee member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, told the delegation that people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait were all Chinese and attending the ceremony showed they

still loved the nation.

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22. PRC Earthquake Reactions

Associated Press (Cara Anna, "CHINA QUAKE AWAKENS NEW FEARS FOR SCHOOL SAFETY", Beijing, 2010/04/20) reports that last week's earthquake in western the PRC destroyed or left in critical condition more than two-thirds of the schools at the center of the disaster, bringing fresh fears two years after an even larger quake left thousands of students dead. The government last year launched a vast project to inspect and strengthen schools across the country, and about 70,000 of them need work to be made quake-proof, a top education official indicated last month. But some people, including students who survived last week's quake in Yushu county, have angrily asked why schools in the remote Tibetan community hadn't been fixed already. The quake's overall death toll rose to 2,064 Tuesday.

Xinhua News ("CHINA TO MOURN QUAKE DEAD, PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT TO BE SUSPENDED", Beijing, 2010/04/20) reported that the PRC flag will be lowered to half-mast around the country and at embassies and consulates abroad Wednesday in a show of respect for those killed in the April 14 earthquake in Qinghai Province, the State Council ordered Tuesday. Public entertainment would also be suspended Wednesday, the State Council, the PRC's cabinet, said in an announcement. Following the announcement, the Ministry of Culture issued an urgent circular, ordering administrative departments to strengthen supervision of entertainment venues and to punish those violating the rule.

Asahi Shimbun (Koichi Furuya, "BEIJING FOCUSES ON ETHNIC CONCERNS", Beijing, 2010/04/20) reports that Chinese leaders, fearing ethnic unrest after a devastating earthquake in predominantly Tibetan Qinghai province, have been unusually attentive to the needs of the victims. Chinese President Hu Jintao toured Yushu county in the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Yushu on Sunday, after cutting short a trip to Brazil. Hu postponed visits to Chile and Venezuela to return home Saturday, saying "I need to be with the people now and oversee relief activities." The Chinese Communist Party's top organ, the Politburo Standing Committee, declared Saturday that the focus of relief assistance efforts should be on "obtaining stability in the quake-hit communities as well as ethnic solidarity."

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23. PRC Climate Change

Xinhua News ("ECO-FRIENDLY BAGS USED TO PREVENT DUNES FROM MOVING IN N CHINA", Hohhot, 2010/04/20) Thousands of Chinese and Japanese volunteers have taken part in an on-going Sino-Japanese experimental program to prevent a desert in north the PRC from expanding with eco-friendly bags. "The bags are made of corn hull, a by-product from corn processing. They will naturally degrade in six years without harming the environment," said Wu Jingzhong, a Chinese representative of the Japan-based World Desert Reclamation Association. The Japanese side has promised to donate a tonne of the corn hull bags to help build the barrier on the eastern edge of the Tengger Desert, the fourth largest in the PRC.

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II. PRC Report

24. PRC Civil Society and Disaster Relief

People's Daily online ("HONG KONG GOVERNMENT PROVIDES FINANCIAL AID TO QINGHAI", 2010/04/20) reported that Hong Kong government announced Monday that according to the suggestions of Disaster Relief Fund Advisory Committee, the government will allocate 4.5 million HKD to Amity Foundation for supporting the victims in Qinghai earthquake disaster.

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25. PRC Environment

China News Net ("ICELAND VOLCANIC ASH AFFECTS ASIA", 2010/04/20) reported that ash from Iceland's volcanic eruption not only caused paralysis of European air traffic, but also affected Asia. Hundreds of airlines from Beijing to Jakarta, from Tokyo to Dubai have been cancelled and tens of thousands of people were stranded in Asian airports and hotels

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