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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. Napsnet

1. US on DPRK Nuclear Program

Korea Times ("RICE DEFENDS 6-WAY TALKS AS ONLY WAY TO DENUCLEARIZE N. KOREA", 2008/12/22) reported that U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Sunday that six-party talks are the only way to achieve the DPRK's denuclearization. "I think more will be achieved, but it's really only going to be achieved in the context of the six parties, because if you don't have China and South Korea and Russia and Japan at the table, too, then the North can play the game that they used to play of getting benefits from other parts of the international community and refusing to carry forward on its obligations." She said 80 percent of the verification protocol has been agreed upon. "What the North wouldn't do is go the last 20 percent, which is to clarify some of the elements of scientific procedures that might be used to sample the soil."

Chosun Ilbo ("'ONLY AN IDIOT WOULD TRUST N.KOREA' ", 2008/12/20) reported that U.S. Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice on Friday told the Council of Foreign Relations that the DPRK would get no energy aid until the dismantlement of its nuclear facilities and the verification process are completed. She added there was some ambiguity in the verification protocol, and the DPRK's position was not to reject the protocol but to refuse to clarify these ambiguities in writing. Rice stated, "I mean, who trusts the North Koreans? You'd have to be an idiot to trust the North Koreans."

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2. DPRK Leadership

Korea Times ("N. KOREAN LEADER MAKES SIXTH PUBLIC APPEARANCE", Seoul, 2008/12/21) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il has recently paid a visit to a ceramic factory, the sixth in a series of trips to military and public facilities, the Korean Central News Agency reported Sunday. "Glorify this year of the 60th anniversary of the founding of the DPRK as a historical turn which will go down in the annals of the country," the DPRK leader was quoted as saying during the inspection.

Chosun Ilbo ("KIM JONG-IL OUTINGS 'NO FAKES'", Seoul, 2008/12/22) reported that ROK and U.S. intelligence authorities believe DPRK leader Kim Jong-il did make the semi-public appearances the DPRK has been reporting in recent weeks. A senior ROK intelligence officer on Sunday said Kim's personal armored train did travel to the areas where Kim was said to have made the visits. "Based on the information we gathered, we think it is highly likely that he actually visited these cities," he said. Another government source said circumstantial evidence suggests that Kim was hospitalized in Ponghwa Hospital after his stroke in mid-August and discharged from the hospital between early and mid-October.

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3. DPRK Defectors

Korea Herald ("FEMALE N. KOREAN MISSIONARY DIES IN LAOTIAN CAMP: MISSIONARY", Seoul, 2008/12/19) reported that a female DPRK defector has died in a Laotian camp, and two other defectors are on the verge of being forcibly evicted to the PRC, ROK missionary Kim Hee-tae was quoted as saying by Yonhap News Agency on Thursday. According to Kim, the three defected from the DPRK together to seek asylum in the ROK by way of China and Laos, but were recently captured near the Laotian border. Immigration officials had demanded the defectors pay US$2,500 in fines by Monday, warning that otherwise, they would be expelled to the PRC.

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4. DPRK Food Security

Yonhap ("NORTH KOREA IS EXPECTING 3-TON POTATO HARVEST", 2008/12/22) reported that the DPRK is expected to harvest as much as 3 million tons of potatoes next year, a Pyongyang official said. The increase was made possible in large part by support and assistance provided by the ROK, visiting the ROK scholars and agricultural officials noted. “The potato is fast becoming an alternative staple food amid a worldwide food crisis,” said Lee Yong-beom, a professor from the University of Seoul. “If North Korea is able to produce and distribute seed potatoes and learn to effectively control harmful insects, it should be able to produce between 3.3 million and 4.25 million tons of potatoes annually,” Lee added.

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5. US Aid for DPRK

Korea Herald ("U.S. SPENDS $4 MILLION ON MEDICAL AID FOR N.KOREA IN 2008, REPORT SAYS", 2008/12/21) reported that the United States government has spent $4 million so far this year via private organizations to help the DPRK improve its medical facilities, Radio Free Asia quoted an unidentified U.S. State Department official as saying. The figure is 40 times higher than the amount the U.S. government spent last year. "We have plans to provide additional humanitarian assistance and medical equipment coupled with training," the official said.

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6. US-DPRK Relations

Yonhap ("PYONGYANG SOUGHT 1974 US CONTACT", 2008/12/22) reported that the DPRK proposed setting up secret contacts with the United States through Romania in 1974, a declassified U.S. document has shown. An aide to then Romanian President Nicolae Ceausescu met with then U.S. President Gerald Ford at the White House on Aug. 27. The aide told Ford that the Romanian president “has offered to help if you want to do it,” without elaborating on what the North Koreans were hoping to discuss. Ford responded, “Certain things must precede such contacts. We don’t want to go in without a firm understanding.”

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7. Inter-Korean Relations

Yonhap ("N. KOREA WILLING TO RETURN PRISONERS IN EXCHANGE FOR ECONOMIC BENEFITS: SOURCES", Beijing/Seoul, 2008/12/22) reported that sources said Monday that the DPRK has conveyed to the ROK that it is willing to return some war prisoners and civilian abductees in exchange for economic benefits. Pyongyang made the proposal through various channels. ROK Unification Minister Kim Ha-joong is currently visiting Beijing to meet with senior PRC officials, but ROK officials denied having any contact with Pyongyang on the prisoners.

Korea Herald ("INTER-KOREAN TRADE FALLS FOR SECOND STRAIGHT MONTH", Seoul, 2008/12/21) reported that inter-Korean trade has decreased for the second consecutive month due to an economic downturn and frozen cross-border relations, the Unification Ministry was quoted as saying by Yonhap News Agency. Inter-Korean trade volume fell 27.7 percent in November from the previous year to $142.72 million. "Payments to North Korea are mostly made in dollars or euro, so the weak Korean currency has been the primary reason for the falling trade," a ministry official said.

Chosun Ilbo ("INTER-KOREAN CHANNELS 'NOT COMPLETELY BLOCKED'", Seoul, 2008/12/22) reported that the ROK is seeking behind-the-scenes dialogue with the the DPRK and has told the U.S., the PRC, and Japan it hopes relations will thaw in spring. A senior government official said the DPRK "doesn't always maintain a hardline stance against South Korea. We've been told through various channels that the position has become more flexible." The official added, "President Lee doesn't regard the inter-Korean relations as stalemated or inter-Korean tension as fixed. He believes that inter-Korean relations have been deadlocked before, and this can change according to circumstances."

Agence France-Presse (Hyung-jin Kim, "NORTH KOREAN LEADER'S FORMER HOME OPEN TO

TOURISTS", Hwajinpo Beach, 2008/12/21) reported that a house known as "The Castle" where DPRK leader Kim Jong Il lived as a child is now a tourist site in the ROK. The ROK is planning to expand tourism on its side of the border, and has encouraged tour operators to dream up projects such as ecological parks showing off the rare wildlife flourishing in the demilitarized zone. A new Korean War museum just north of Kim's former villa is scheduled to open in March.

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8. US-ROK FTA

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, Kim Sue-young, "GOVERNING PARTY OFFERS DIALOGUE OVER FTA BILL", Seoul, 2008/12/21) reported that governing Grand National Party (GNP) Chairman Park Hee-tae on Sunday offered to hold the "last'' dialogue with opposition parties over disputed bills, including one on the ratification of the Korea-U.S. free trade agreement (FTA). ``We'll do our best by Thursday to resolve the dispute over the FTA bill through dialogue with opposition parties,'' Park said. "We hope the ruling and opposition parties will be able to reach a common ground.'' "Park's proposal for dialogue is an ultimatum before railroading the FTA motion,'' said Rep. Cho Jung-shik, a Democratic Party spokesman. "A promise not to pass bills unilaterally is a precondition.''

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9. ROK Military

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "1ST AEGIS DESTROYER TO BEGIN SERVICE", Seoul, 2008/12/21) reported that the ROK's first Aegis-equipped destroyer, Sejong the Great, began operations Monday after 19 months of successful sea trials, the Navy said Sunday. The ship is expected to play a key role in helping the Navy develop its blue-water capability beyond the traditional coastal defense against DPRK ships, Navy officials said.

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10. US Military in Japan

Yomiuri Shimbun ("GOVT TO EARMARK 69 BIL. YEN FOR U.S. TROOP TRANSFER", Tokyo, 2008/12/21) reported that the government has decided to set aside about 68.9 billion yen in the fiscal 2009 budget to be spent on projects related to the realignment of U.S. forces stationed in Japan. About 35.3 billion yen will be set aside for site preparation work of a marine corps headquarters building and accommodation facilities; 9.4 billion yen for the transfer of Futenma Air Station; and 5.6 billion yen for the planned transfer of carrier-based aircraft units to the Iwakuni Air Station.

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11. Japan on US Nuclear Umbrella

Associated Press (Tomoko A. Hosaka, "JAPAN IN '65 SOUGHT US NUCLEAR SHIELD VERSUS CHINA", Tokyo, 2008/12/22) reported that Japan's then prime minister Eisaku Sato asked the U.S. in

1965 to deploy nuclear weapons against PRC if war broke out, according to newly declassified government files obtained by Kyodo news agency. During his first trip to Washington Sato told then-U.S. Defense Secretary Robert McNamara that US military forces could launch a nuclear attack on the PRC by sea if needed. Sato also told McNamara that although Japan was technically capable of building atomic weapons, it had no intention of doing so.

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12. Japanese Military Deployments

Yomiuri Shimbun ("CHINA ANTIPIRACY MOVE HAS JAPAN ALL AT SEA", Tokyo, 2008/12/22) reported that the Japanese government is reportedly extremely frustrated following the PRC's announcement that it plans to dispatch naval ships to the seas off Somalia to back U.N.-led efforts to fight piracy. If Japan fails to come up with ideas for contributing to the operations before U.S. President-elect Barack Obama takes office in January it will fall behind the PRC in terms of building a relationship with the new U.S. administration, observers said.

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13. Japanese Politics

New York Times (Norimitsu Onishi, "JAPAN ADMITS WWII PRISONERS WORKED AT MINE OWNED BY PREMIER'S FAMILY", Tokyo, 2008/12/19) reported that the Japanese government has acknowledged for the first time that Allied prisoners during World War II were made to work at a coal mine owned by the family of Prime Minister Taro Aso. The admission came after the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, under prodding from an opposition lawmaker, released documents showing that 300 Australian, British and Dutch prisoners of war worked at a mine owned by Aso Mining during the last four months of the war.

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14. Japanese Whaling

Agence France-Presse ("ACTIVISTS SAY JAPANESE WHALERS HAVE MADE NO KILLS IN TWO DAYS", Sydney, 2008/12/22 19:00:00 GMT+0) reported that environmental activists Monday said they had been pursuing Japanese whalers through blizzards in the Antarctic for two days during which the harpooners had been unable to kill any whales. Paul Watson, captain of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society vessel trailing the Japanese fleet, said they had intercepted the whalers on Saturday morning in dangerous conditions off Antarctica.

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15. Cross Strait Relations

Associated Press ("CHINA PROMISES ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO TAIWAN", Beijing, 2008/12/20) reported that the PRC offered Saturday at a meeting between the PRC's Communist Party and Taiwan's ruling Nationalists in Shanghai to help Taiwan boost its economy if it needs assistance to

weather the world economic slowdown. Jia Qinglin, the fourth-most-powerful person in the CCP, didn't specify what kind of assistance or how much would be offered, but urged Taiwan to make it easier for mainland businesses to invest there.

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16. PRC Overseas Deployment

Associated Press ("CHINA TO SEND 3 SHIPS TO SOMALIA TO BATTLE PIRATES", Beijing, 2008/12/21) reported that PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman, Liu Jianchao, said in a statement issued late Saturday that the PRC navy will send three ships to the waters off Somalia this week to protect Chinese vessels and crews from pirate attacks. Two destroyers and a supply ship will leave Hainan on Dec. 26 to patrol the Gulf of Aden and areas off the Somali coast. "Their major task is to protect the safety of Chinese ships and crew on board as well as ships carrying humanitarian relief material for international organizations," Liu said.

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17. PRC Social Unrest

China Daily (Xie Chuanjiao, "MAINTAINING STABILITY KEY -- TOP JUDGE", Being, 2008/12/20) reported that Wang Shengjun, president of the PRC's Supreme People's Court (SPC),said on Friday maintaining social stability amid the global economic slowdown should be courts' top priority. The SPC will "actively provide sound judicial security and judicial services for maintaining the nation's smooth and relatively fast economic development", Wang said. "The most urgent task is to resolve economic, civil and administrative disputes caused by the financial crisis," he said.

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18. PRC Internet Censorship

New York Times (Keith Bradsher, "CHINA BLOCKS ACCESS TO THE TIMES' WEBSITE", Hong Kong, 2008/12/19) reported that PRC authorities have begun blocking access from the PRC to the Web site of The New York Times. Some users were cut off on Thursday as early as 8 p.m. The blocking was still in effect on Saturday morning. But the Chinese-language Web sites of BBC, Voice of America and Asiaweek, all of which had been blocked earlier this week, were accessible by Friday.

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19. PRC AIDS

Los Angeles Times (Barbara Demick, "BELATEDLY, CHINA SPREADS WORD ABOUT HIV PREVENTION", Beijing, 2008/12/20) reported that the PRC is carrying out an AIDS awareness campaign. To mark World AIDS Day on Dec. 1, a banner of a giant red ribbon was draped from the huge National Stadium. President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao were widely photographed with their arms around HIV-positive people. "Time to recognize that AIDS is a disease, not a shame,"

extolled the official New China News Agency recently.

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II. PRC Report

20. PRC Civil Society

Public Welfare News (Xu Hui, "CHINA SOCIAL ORGANIZATION FORUM TO BE HELD", 2008/12/19) reported that the behavior of numerous social organizations receives much concerns of the public this year. To publicize the function of social organizations and promote their development, the 2008 China Social Organization Forum will be held in the Great Hall of the People on December 19. This Forum was jointly launched by Ministry of Civil Affairs, the National Administration Academy and Tsinghua University. It will focus on discussing the function of social organizations in social economy, especially under the current financial crisis, how to bring the organizations themselves into the role.

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21. PRC Space Program

Xinhua News (Liu Weiguo, "MACAO FOUNDATION AND BUSINESS INDUSTRY DONATE TO CHINA'S AEROSPACE CAUSE", 2008/12/19) reported that Macao Foundation and representatives of Macao Business Circle have donated 17.2 million Macao Patacas to the PRC's aerospace cause. Recently, delegation of Shenzhou VII manned space flight visited Macao. The delegation, during its stay, made science presentations to the public, communicated with local students and attended a grand gala hosted by the government. This visit further inspired the patriotic enthusiasm of Macao compatriots, so they all take concrete actions to support the motherland's aerospace cause.

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22. PRC Civil Society and the Disabled

Sanxiang Urban News (Hu Xinfeng, Yu Kunwu, "HUNAN DISABLED PERSONS WELFARE FOUNDATION ESTABLISHED", 2008/12/18) reported that on the 20 th founding anniversary of Hunan Disabled Persons' Federation, Hunan Disabled Persons Welfare Foundation was announced to be established. The first raised fund is 7.1 million yuan, and will be used on medical care, employment, education and other aspects of the disabled persons. The famous singer Li Guyi who is also born in Hunan province is invited as the Image Ambassador of the Foundation.

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III. ROK Report

23. DPRK Nuclear Program

Tongil News (Jaebong Lee, Professor of Political Science and Diplomacy at Wonkwang University, "ROK'S DISPOSITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND DPRK'S DEVELOPMENT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS", 2008/12/22) wrote that despite stronger and bigger economic and diplomatic power than that of the DPRK, the ROK still hopes to strengthen its alliance with the U.S., to keep U.S. troops in the nation, and to stay under the protection of the American nuclear umbrella. In this situation, will the DPRK be able to give up nuclear weapons, especially when their system is in danger? We need to consider what is like when the shoe is on the other foot; we need to create the conditions and circumstances where the DPRK can give up nuclear weapons and nuclear complex without fear of losing their system. It is unrealistic to insist the DPRK abandon its nuclear weapons without preparing to get rid of the American nuclear umbrella and the ROK-U.S. alliance.

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24. ROK Foreign Policy

KIFS (Soogeun Woo, "CHINA-JAPAN FOREIGN STRATEGIES AND ROK'S FUTURE FOREIGN STRATEGIES", 2008/12/19) reported that Soogeun Woo, a foreign professor at Donghua University in Shanghai, writes that the ROK needs to pursue "early-bird-style" foreign policy. In other words, the ROK needs to become a peninsula with strong continental powers such as China and Russia on the left wing and strong naval forces such as Japan and the U.S. on the right. He added that birds can fly only when there is balance in the power and size of both its wings. This rule also applies to ROK, which can be signified as the middle body; if one wing is abnormally bigger/stronger or smaller/weaker than the other, it will no longer be able to fly.

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